

## **BELIEVING IS SEEING: JOHN 14:15-21**

*By J. Lawrence McCleskey*

The "Show Me State" it is called: Missouri. It has become a folk saying: Show me! If I see it, I will believe it." So [they] get the saying, "Seeing is believing."

It's like the person who was asked if he believed in infant baptism. "Believe in it?" he responded. "I've seen it!"

But in this bit of monologue from Jesus' Farewell Discourse with his disciples we get just the opposite perspective. Jesus is talking about the promised presence of the Spirit with the disciples, and he is talking about his own presence with them.

He keeps dropping hints that he will soon leave them, but he keeps reassuring them as well that he will not leave them alone, or "orphaned" as the New Revised Standard Version so correctly puts it.

And he makes an interesting contrast between what the disciples will see and what "the world" will see. The world will not know the Spirit, "because it neither sees him nor knows him."

**In the same manner, soon the world will not see Jesus. But it is altogether different with disciples. They will know the Spirit because the Spirit abides with them and in them. Likewise, the disciples will know the resurrected Lord because he is in them and they are in him. Disciples do not believe in the Spirit and in the resurrected Lord because they see the Spirit and Jesus.**

**It is the other way around: Disciples see, or know, the Spirit and the resurrected Lord because of their faith. The revelation is as much to faith as it is through faith.**

**William Barclay puts it this way: "The point of Jesus' saying is: 'We can see only what we are fitted to see.'" An astronomer will perceive much more in the night sky than an untrained eye. Someone trained in art will see far more in a painting than another person who has never studied art. The trained musician will enjoy a symphony much more than someone who is unfamiliar with musical style or technique. What we are able to perceive in any situation depends on what we bring to the experience.**

**Likewise, someone who has given up on the very notion of God won't be listening for him. If we hope to receive the Holy Spirit in our own lives, it requires waiting and watching for him, in expectation of his arrival. If you want to know the presence of the Spirit in your life, don't challenge God to "Show me!" Don't take the attitude that if God wants me to know his Spirit, then God will make it happen.**

**Don't take the position "I'll believe it when I see it." Rather, if you want to know that presence, then expect it, wait for it, prepare for it, believe in its coming.**

**You'll see it. After all, believing is seeing!**

**Let us pray...**

**Living and gracious God,**

**through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ**

**you have brought us out to a spacious place**

**where we are called to live as those redeemed.**

**Empower us by your spirit to keep your commandments,**

**that we may show forth your love**

**with gentle word and reverent deed**

**to all your people. Amen.**

*(prayer, Vanderbilt Divinity Library)*