

Think about the messages you see and hear on your phone or television every night. The burger chains telling us to “have it your way,” or that we “deserve a break today.” The perfume peddlers inviting us to indulge, “because you’re worth it.” The insurance companies claiming, “you’re in good hands” because they are “on your side.” The weight loss infomercials offering “100% Satisfaction Guarantees” to hedge against “buyer’s remorse,” adding that if you don’t “see a positive difference within 30 days,” you get a full refund. Advertisers know that we want assurances, the promise of a better life, or at least a safety net if things go wrong. Since the future is not always clear, we want confirmation that we are on the right path.

Which is why Thomas asks for some coordinates. “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Rather than a long-winded philosophical response, Jesus simply gives *himself*. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). This is not a guarantee stamped on a box; it is a personal relationship with Jesus. Discipleship is not about finding the *right route* but about following the *right Person*.

Then Philip asks for the ultimate sign: “Show us the Father.” Jesus replies, “Have I been with you all this time...and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Many people in Israel’s story longed to see God. Moses begged, “Show me your glory.” The prophets spoke of visions and voices. Philip’s request is a cousin of this longing. Jesus answers with a claim that would be scandalous if it were not true: the clearest, truest vision of the Father is found in the face, words, and works of Jesus. “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:11). If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus. He stoops to wash feet, heals the broken, forgives his enemies, welcomes the stranger, speaks truth to power, and lays down his life in love for us. Then take it a step further: If you want to know what Jesus looks like, find someone who professes to know him by loving, speaking, and acting as he did. Find such a person, a true disciple. and you might find satisfaction.

There is a well-known sermon illustration that has been circulating for years. It’s an urban legend about the busy executive rushing to catch a train because he’s late for an appointment. He gets to the track and bumps into a kid, knocking him to the ground and scattering his bag of Lincoln Logs all over the platform. The hapless businessman, flustered, wavers momentarily, and then crouches beside the boy, pulls him to his feet, and helps him collect the Lincoln Logs. The boy is in awe, and asks him, “Mister, are you Jesus?” In that moment, this nameless CEO realizes that he is, in fact, Jesus. He acted

precisely the same way as the Jesus who said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

This story probably never happened, but it does raise some interesting questions. Would you be mistaken for Jesus, or for someone who claims to know God, if: You act like an entitled customer who abuses the wait staff at a restaurant? You are a mean-spirited digital warrior who thinks it’s okay to post vicious, non-constructive, or character-assassinating comments on social media? You are known as a prideful, arrogant, abusive, and judgmental person? You walk past a homeless person in obvious need of assistance or interaction without rendering aid? Philip wants to be shown the Father. Jesus says that if you know him, you know God. The implicit question is this: “In what way does our life demonstrate a knowledge of Jesus?”

The slogans and taglines to which we referred earlier (like “Have it your way”) can act as false gospels or mini creeds that show what our culture worships: clarity, comfort, and convenience. But the discipleship counter-story tells us that satisfaction isn’t guaranteed by policy or purchase: *satisfaction is found in the Person of Jesus Christ*. Jesus guarantees satisfaction, just not the kind we typically seek. Jesus doesn’t promise that every question will be answered as we expect, that every road will be smooth, or that every pain and problem will be quickly remediated. What Jesus guarantees is an eternal place, the divine presence, and a purpose.

Jesus guarantees an eternal PLACE. “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places...I go and prepare a place for you” (vv. 2-3). Jesus anchors our future, not in wishful thinking, but in the absolute confidence of an eternal home, here spoken of as his Father’s house. Jesus didn’t wonder about the life beyond this earth; He knew it to be true, and he promised his disciples that there was room for everyone in heaven. Jesus promised to prepare a place for his people because he loves them and is confident of their arrival. Jesus promised to come again for the disciples not only in the sense of his imminent resurrection or in the coming of the Holy Spirit, but in the great gathering together of his people at the end of the age. Jesus says, “Don’t trouble yourself: you have a home with the Father. Guaranteed! The world will still shake, but your future is safe with me.

Jesus guarantees the divine PRESENCE. He doesn’t hand us some heavy theological notion: He offers himself. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...If you know me, you will know my Father also” (John 14:6-7). Jesus didn’t say that he would *show us* a way; he said that he *is* the way. He didn’t promise to *teach us* a truth; he said that he *is* the truth.

Jesus didn't offer us the secrets to life; he said that he *is* the life. Even after his ascension, Jesus' presence remains through his Word and by the Spirit (John 1 4:16-18). Jesus promises he will always be with us, here and now, and until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus guarantees PURPOSE. "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and...will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 1 4:12). We are promised a role to play in the redemption of the world as partners with Jesus. We will do greater work, he says; not necessarily flashier miracles but works with a greater scope and deeper reach. The risen Christ extends his mercy and truth through a global church, moving our satisfaction beyond "my needs met" to "my life caught up in God's greater mission." The guarantee is *meaning*: our life, our prayers, and our deeds as part of what God is doing on behalf of the world.

Jesus offers us the gifts of place, person, and purpose: satisfaction guaranteed. This is a satisfaction reframed by the Gospel. It's not a guarantee of ease, but of presence: "I am with you." It's not a guarantee of control, but of communion: "The Father is in me, and I am in the Father." It's not a guarantee of our plan, but of his purpose: "Greater works...that the Father may be glorified in the Son." It's not a guarantee of temporary thrills, but of eternal belonging: "I go to prepare a place for you."

If your heart is troubled, hear Jesus' first word again: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). If you echo Thomas' question, "How can we know the way?" then hear Jesus' second word: "I am the way" (John 14:6). If you demand with Philip, "Show us the Father," hear Jesus' third word: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). If you are wondering whether your life can make any difference, carry home Jesus' promise: "The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do...If in my name you ask me...I will do it" (John 14:12-14). This is Jesus' version of "Satisfaction Guaranteed": a place for you, a presence with you, and a purpose worth investing your whole life to fulfill. Sounds like a good deal.

Prayer: Loving God, Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me." Thank You for this wonderful word of comfort. Enable me, in the power of the Spirit, to hold fast to the truth of Your Word. I pray that You would endow me the wisdom, the words, and the grace, to pour forth Your comfort to others who are facing their own difficult trials. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Satisfaction Guaranteed

Sunday, May 3, 2026

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

John 14:1-14

"Satisfaction Guaranteed." You see it stamped on boxes, printed on receipts, and splashed across storefront windows and websites. It is the promise we crave before we buy. The expression has its origins in the retail mail order business. Montgomery Ward is thought to be the first retailer to make this unequivocal and remarkable promise when he founded the first successful general merchandise mail-order business in 1872. Ward's guarantee was a revolutionary and essential marketing tool aimed at building trust. People in rural areas patronized local general stores and were skeptical of buying goods *sight unseen* from a catalog. By offering the unconditional promise, "Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back," Ward reassured customers that they could trust the company and its products, effectively diffusing the risk of buying by mail. This promise of customer satisfaction helped the company become a massive success and set a standard that continues today.

Our text says that long before return policies and customer service, our faith ancestors also sought guarantees. In the Upper Room, in the hours before he died, Jesus' friends reached out for reassurance. Philip said what many of us feel but rarely say out loud: "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" (John 14:8). In other words, "Give me a guarantee, and I will feel better about investing in you." Deep within us is the need to seek assurance, to find some guarantee that truly satisfies; but Jesus' guarantee is surprising.

John 14 unfolds in an atmosphere of anxiety: Jesus washed their feet; Judas slipped out into the night; and Peter heard he would deny Jesus before dawn. It is into this emotionally charged environment that Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Then, Jesus widens their field of vision by saying, "In my Father's house are many dwelling places...if I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again" (John 14:2-3). So many promises. So many unanswered questions.

Thomas speaks for those still *unsure*: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5). Philip speaks for those still *unsatisfied*: "Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied" (John 14:8). Those voices still live within us, longing for clarity ("show us the way") and certainty ("show us the Father"). We want a plan that guarantees outcomes. We want satisfaction that can be measured, reviewed, and returned within 30 days. Underlying both questions is something deeper and more honest: we want *presence*. We want to know we are not alone, that life is not random, that there is a greater purpose.