

Divine Evolutionary Emergence: Jn. 14-16

The **Farewell Discourse** in John's Gospel is one of the most consoling passages in Scripture. Jesus says he is going to the Source of all and that he will prepare a place for his disciples. However, the disciples are disturbed because they had a **different expectation**. The early church expected a visible return accompanied by cosmic forces. I Thess. 4:16-18 describes this atmosphere.

John's Gospel **reinterprets** this expectation. Rather than a cataclysmic second coming, he will send them the Spirit of truth who represents the continued presence of Christ. The dwelling place he prepares, rather than being **out there** somewhere, will be found **within** the believers themselves. For John, this is the coming (**parousia**) of the Lord (Brueggemann).

To the question of the Pharisees about the coming of God's Kingdom, Jesus in Matthew's Gospel replies, that the Kingdom is **within**, yet **unfolding**. In Luke 13: 20-21: "The coming of the Kingdom cannot be observed, and no one will announce 'Look, here it is', or 'there it is'. For behold, the Kingdom of God is among you."

The emphasis is thus shifted from an imminent, observable coming to something already present. Note, "**among**" is preferred to "within".

So, for us today, what does John's reinterpretation imply? Mistaken about the immanent return of Jesus, the early church learned to live in its promise. And so it is with us: we too must live in the **promise** of the creative, evolutionary Spirit. Our parousia is **justice** and it begins here on earth **now**. What we need is a dedication to making it happen. The Spirit has been sent; the power is within and among us: a counselor, an advocate, a creative, energetic impulse unfolding in the direction of **new possibilities**. We are **co-creators** of a new church and new world.

What will **prevent** this from happening? Institutionalized sexism, racism, ageism, literalism, militarism, adultism, materialism, consumerism. If there is one thing Jesus redeemed us from, it is **fear** and every effort to purge these evil spirits is service in an **evolutionary faith**. Perhaps parousia refers not to a coming back, but a coming forth, an **emergence**, an arrival of a point where justice and peace kiss.

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