

I am sitting here imagining the last supper. It is 1st century Palestine, in a room with a simple, wooden, rectangle table where Jesus and 12 disciples are seated. There are no chairs, everyone is sitting on the floor. It is a dirt floor, the room has a low ceiling and a narrow doorway. Because houses were often arranged around a central shared courtyard, I imagine I'd hear voices in the streets - voices of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic "bumping into one another," some friendly, some hostile... children as well as adults... probably a few religious conversations, yet I'm guessing much of what I am hearing is very secular, more about life in general.

Families are gathered around the water cistern filling their earthen vessels and catching up on the day's activities. Perhaps the call of livestock - donkeys braying, the bleats of goats and sheep, and clucking chickens - echoes in the distance. The traditional aromas of bread baking, as well as spices of cumin, coriander, mint and dill, waft through the air. Maybe the sight of wine and smells of fermented grapes ignite my senses as the glow of oil lamps fills the view outside the small window of our room.

As I imagine the 12 in this place, I wonder what the conversation would have been. I can never know, but I'd like to think fast some point Jesus is telling the disciples what each has meant to him, how they have supported him, how his life has been made more abundant and meaningful because of their friendship the past few years.

I'd like to think that each disciple also represents someone in my own life who demonstrates similar qualities. Who is Peter in my world, or Judas, or Simon? We don't navigate this world singularly, so who are the 12 that make up my own "disciples?" Who walks this journey with me time and time again through my own crucifixions and resurrections?

Peter, let me speak to you first. I want to make sure you know what a powerful demonstration of faith you are. You have embodied this, spoken of it, and brought faith to life for me. Unbenownst to you, I have watched you intently as you came to understand that faith isn't something that arrives one day with a giant thud, but rather a faculty that grows, expands, and comes to life when invited.

It is you Peter, who has always made sure I felt welcomed wherever we have been, even among strangers and foreign lands - oftentimes not even knowing where our journey would lead us! In the same way, you have welcomed your own doubts, fears and guilt, yet remained true in your heart to love your God with your whole being and to love your neighbor.

You have at times been impetuous and strong-willed, yet courageous beyond measure. You made peace with challenges that have come our way, and have remained steadfast in knowing faith directs each of us to express God as generosity, gratitude, love, harmony and life. Rather than faith being a set of principles, dogma or creeds, you have shown me that it becomes the activity of trusting and committing to a constant “listening” to the eternal voice.

You, Peter, are the reminder of staying harmonized with that place of grace within each of us that does not change. Your presence has taught me faith is not *absolute*, rather, my faith *absolutely knows*, and at the same time asks me to remember that I don’t know at all. Faith simultaneously involves a connection with the immensity of infinite spirit and a feeling of the intimate touch of God. Before I leave this world Peter, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

Sweet, gentle, strong **Andrew**... You were the first of the 12... I extended my hand to you, and you said “yes.” A strength like no other is what has been your foundation, and therefore mine. I could never have walked this journey of the last few years without you. How many times did you hear my frustrations and upset with those who would not help the less fortunate? How many times did you see me weep for those who were unwilling to accept the love we so freely offered? How many times did you silently witness my own doubts and fears and then gently whisper the words I didn’t even know I needed to hear, “You are not alone. I am uplifting and strengthening you. When you fall, I will be there to hold you.”

This is what we are for each other, strength of body, mind and spirit. Each time I looked at you over the past few years, I have seen the power and the purity of your steadfast perseverance that carries you through any difficulty. You have survived because you have learned to ride the natural current of life. You remind me, and those around you, our strength comes from our joys *and* our sufferings. Holding on to that, always knowing it is the guide through the chaos, and ultimately to the remembrance that God is everywhere present. Before I leave this world Andrew, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

This may sound strange **James, son of Zebedee**, but one of the first things I noticed when I met you was what I call an “eternal lighthouse” within you. This lighthouse has guided you, always supporting you in spiritual understanding, which has lead you to taking right action, regardless of the circumstances. Your ability to always turn within, to be still and listen, amazes me.

Sometimes on our long walks, I would listen with rapt attention as you shared the depth of your understanding of this great web of life, and where we each fit into that. Few grasp this knowledge, yet it is not of the intellect, but rather the out-picturing of your living heart. You seem to be able to keep experiencing life without holding on to the experiences. Your mastery of using each life experience as a way to stay alive, to be more alive, to live life more abundantly, with greater purpose and meaning, is a gift for all humanity. I love this most about you. Do you see this for yourself? I hope you do.

James, you are the manifestation of the living God, and I offer my deep appreciation for you being an eyewitness to my life and work. You have acted with great wisdom, with right seeing and knowing, always understanding beyond what our eyes see. Before I leave this world James, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

I look at you, **John**, and I smile, chuckling inside for just a moment. There have been times when you seemed least like the others of our little group. I know that sounds odd, after all, so often you seem to fit in everywhere, with strangers and friends alike. And yet at moments it's as though you simultaneously fit nowhere. There's really no other way to say what you have been for me, except to say you are love - incarnate. So for me to also say it seems like you don't fit in at times, does indeed seem paradoxical!

I think the reason for this is because we don't often know how to be in the energy of love when it is TRULY expressed. But you are so unique, you don't even think about it, there is nothing to decide - you are just love. Sadly, I think because people so rarely experience the love you embody, they don't know how to be around you. I confess there have been times when I wasn't sure.

We aren't used to this kind of love, so it can feel unsettling, foreign, maybe even frightening if a person thinks themselves unworthy. What you have shown me is that love doesn't discriminate, YOU don't discriminate, you simply love for love's sake. You see everything - every fault, lie, hurt, misunderstanding, mistake - EVERYTHING. Yet at the same time, you see none of it. Because love sees more of things, it sees less.

It is your God nature which is love, creating the space for sharing my innermost shadows and wounds, and then drawing me out to rest in your safety, to know my own healing and wholeness. You are a soft place to fall when my world is circling out of control. It is love which does this, it is you John, who has done this for me, and will always do so because I

believe you can't be anything less. Before I leave this world John, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

Whenever I get ready to speak with you **Phillip**, I find myself taking a deep breath, which brings me a sense of being grounded, a sense of standing on a solid foundation. That simple act of a slow, deep breath before I speak is the perfect symbol for you Phillip. Through this short time we have known each other I have watched you come to Truth slowly, like a long inhale filling your lungs. Even times when you don't recognize Truth staring you in the face, you still take life in and make space for Truth to germinate.

Then I see it - your face changes as you continue to breathe slowly. I see you awaken to the power that you are by harnessing all the life energies within yourself! Once harnessed you have an uncanny ability to direct it with laser focus in order to bring forth God ideas here on earth. Everything about you shifts and your glory starts to shine! After your glory begins to shine, then comes your voice filled with what you have just realized, and I am captivated. You amaze me and take my breath away. You have made my ministry a sanctuary of power and grace.

From every miracle you have witnessed, to the difficult encounters with those who work to deny the life, love, power and substance that is God, you continually work at coming into your own.

Each time you find your voice, you leave echoes of perfection that gently land on people's hearts, while also lighting the path for those who are lost. Your presence reverberates this as possibly our greatest creative power coming to life. Before I leave this world Phillip, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

I am so grateful Phillip brought you into my life, **Bartholomew**, and I probably haven't told you often enough. On numerous occasions you have helped me see beyond what is in front of me. Your capacity to imagine the unimaginable fascinates me and encourages me to do the same. As you know, there have been times when I didn't understand why people couldn't hear my message, I didn't understand how they could ignore the cries of those who need food, warmth and nurturing.

With great clarity and with no words, you have brought me back to focus, simply by looking me in the eyes, and reflecting back to me the image and likeness of God. In doing so you awakened me to ever-greater, imaginative ways to show my divinity through my humanity. It is through me, as a human, that God takes shape, and there are infinite ways to do that. Do you realize how many of those ways you have demonstrated?

You always make me laugh, I don't want to forget to tell you that. Sometimes it takes me a few minutes to catch up to your brain, it's always creating and giving shape to the sacred, as well as the sublime! Mostly what I am grateful for is your capacity to shape and form God into what the world needs most: compassion, joy, support, love, silliness, kindness, courage, enthusiasm and so much more. You remind me of the infinite possibilities available at all times. In my world you are the "good life," eternally present, molded and shaped from body, mind and spirit. Before I leave this world Bartholomew, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

Thomas, Thomas, Thomas... such a reputation you have. Did you know most people see your questioning as a lack of faith? I don't believe that though. I have always believed you were exceedingly curious and have a very strong desire to know yourself and the world in a more profound way. That requires questioning. How else can you understand, comprehend and perceive the world rightly without questioning? I think a little skepticism now and then is actually healthy.

I love your "interrogations," as the other 11 have come to call them, because they inspire me to see the world through another's eyes. You remind me that I don't always have an expansive view of the world. For the kingdom of heaven to unfold I need to be able to stretch, to see with new eyes, taking in all that is happening. And not just with my five senses, but with my heart and mind too.

Over the years, there have been many times I have listened deeply to your doubts and fears, and my heart has been heavy that you sometimes feel discouraged. Yet no matter what is happening around us, you don't question our two great commandments. May you always demonstrate that childlike curiosity and inquisitive, questioning nature - even if it comes from fear - because it leads you to the still waters of knowing the peace that surpasses all human understanding. Before I leave this world Thomas, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

I've always wondered what was it in your childhood **Matthew** that brought forth such a willful soul? Well, whatever it was, let me make sure you hear me clearly - I AM SO GRATEFUL. Through the power of your will, you have moved all of us into action these past few years, even when we were so weary. You directed us, made decisions for our well-being, listened and then supported each of us as we chose our next right steps.

What makes this so remarkable is that when you first joined us, the last thing that seemed to interest you was caring for another. Being a tax collector put you at the bottom of the rung, and I can only imagine that self-worth, or the value you held for yourself, could not have been very high. And yet, you consciously decided to come with us. Many times over the years I have relished watching you move more and more into a place of great humility. You learned to see yourself in others, opening the eyes of your heart, and immediately could show the rest of us how to do that too. You are the Will of God Matthew, you have been my compass.

In some of my darkest moments, it is your willingness to walk with me that has allowed me to take another step. Truly I knew in those moments God was the living, breathing Matthew I see before me right now. There are others things you could have done in this lifetime, things that would have brought less pain, less frustration, less controversy, but you chose righteously, with "right use" to follow the Way of Life with me and your 11 brothers. You have made your YES be YES and your NO be NO because of the latitude of thought tempered always with love. Before I leave this world Matthew, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

I wonder if you fear that people don't see you **James, son of Alphaeus**, or that you don't now how much your presence here matters. Perhaps it is because you are like that hidden, naturally ordered current flowing through all life. You seem to have mastered being in alignment with this universal law of life - which cannot be seen, but felt - in order to have a world brought forth in a harmonious and balanced way. And who doesn't want more of that?

In your quietness, sometimes even obscurity, you have shown us clearly how to organize divine ideas and create our experiences from spiritual principles. It is a gift my friend. Many of us forget this and life becomes messy, confusing, and I know for me, I have gotten lost in the details and then everything around me becomes the opposite of what I would like to experience.

When I realize that's what's going on, I look at who, and I exhale a sigh of relief. While we each recognize that growth and evolution is always occurring, rarely do I find

someone who so readily embodies that growth without struggling. Divine Order is one of the most challenging of all the laws of the universe, yet I am blessed by you. You are my teacher who demonstrates how to participate with this law consciously. Most of us wrestle with change by resisting it. I am eternally grateful to you for showing me another way of being with the unfolding kingdom of god. Before I leave this world James, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

Like John, I smile a Cheshire grin when I look at you **Simon**, and even if you're not around, and someone mentions your name, a chuckle emerges from within me. You're like the "problem" child who can't sit still, and yet who could get annoyed over your fierce expression of the zeal of Spirit? Sometimes the intensity is indeed overpowering, and yet I admit, I love your fiery passion for life. Never have I met someone with a greater capacity for diving into the day knowing full well what is rightfully theirs to accomplish!

You are in many ways so unlike your brothers at this table when expressing your enthusiasm and devotion for God and the laws of life. Who can hold a candle to you when it comes to carrying us to the mountaintops of spiritual principles so that we might each awaken the vital force of Spirit? My answer is no one.

You have gifted me with an immeasurable awakening to the fires that burn behind the words of Truth we use when talking with people, when responding to each others needs... These fires have motivated us into action - action that is no different than the winds, tides and storms that move the universe. You are the quintessential force for good which moves humanity, urging us always to spring forward to accomplish what seems like miracles, but for you is just another day! I marvel at how you make it seem so easy. The thought of not being around you to spur me on is unimaginable. You are the the glory of all creation. Before I leave this world Simon, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

My gentle, humble friend, **Thaddeus**, ever faithful to what is true, good and beautiful. I don't know how you became so adept at navigating this world free from limitations. When you are near me, your presence affirms that I have the power to let go of the old so that the new may emerge. I'm not sure you realize what a healer you are. There is no haughtiness or arrogance in you, you simply recognize when someone needs to surrender to the inner knowing that is their God nature.

I remember one day we had been walking for many hours, and you noticed I had slowed under the weight of the pack I was carrying. You gently and silently took my sack, smiled at me and slowed your pace to match mine. In that moment, I was reminded that this journey in life is not a solitary one. We all need people to remind us there is a way free from the burdens when we go astray, when life is heavy, when the body is weary and the mind is laden with troubles.

Because of you, I have been able to more quickly recognize when I am carrying more than is mine. Once I realize what I am doing, then at any time I can set down what is burdensome. Thoughts, things, feelings and beliefs all need my attention so I can know what is really an expression of Truth, and what can be released. My life, and the lives of so many others are freer, lighter and more meaningful because of you. When I have told people to live life more abundantly, I was thinking of you. Before I leave this world Thaddeus, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

Judas, you somehow manage to bring out the best and worst in those around you. I know that may sound like a criticism, so please hear me when I say it is the exact opposite. You are generally misunderstood, and that saddens me because I know you want nothing more than to be seen, understood, and forgiven when you act in ways that aren't expressing your true nature. Your presence invokes in others their own power to express the eternal activity of God - which is life itself.

Similar to what I told John, that is a scary idea for some people, it reminds us of the great responsibility we have for the life we are living. It invites us to acknowledge what a privilege it is to be alive, and that as long as we are breathing, we are our brother's keeper. We belong to each other, and therefore my life depends on your life, and vice versa. In fact, you have shown me that all life on earth - and earth itself - depends on each one of us. You wake people up to this idea, and push them into action, and that can be disconcerting and unsettling. I know I have felt this way a few times, but I cannot deny the urgent and necessary presence of your life in mine.

Most of us don't want to be that responsible each day, and yet we were created for these times - you remind us that we are indeed equipped. I am forever changed because of your ability to express the activity of God with such intensity and commitment. Sometimes it is overwhelming for you, I know that, and you retreat, closing off your heart. You hold your breath and become small, believing you're not capable, and deny all that you know

to be true. It is those moments of denying when you do things you regret. Then you carry overwhelming shame. When this happens, remember to start breathing again, believing in that pattern of life within you that is “possessed by God,” and then your life will flow freely once again. Before I leave this world Judas, I want you to know this is who you have been for me, and the world is better for it.

I have loved you all from the beginning my friends, and there is nothing you can do to alter that. If you feel any shame or guilt right now, put it down, it stifles your life, putting a choke hold on that eternal activity of God that you each uniquely embody. As I have humbly lived my life, falling down and getting up, you have taught me over and over to align my own heartbeat with the rhythm of the universe, which allows us to make the invisible, visible, over and over again. I celebrate the thrill of life, the engaging, affirmative impulse of God you have each gifted me. I know you will continue to bring to this world what it so desperately needs in your own unique ways. We are infinite possibilities shining brightly, lighting the way for the world. We are the restoration of our original goodness. You are God with us.