

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1

“15 **Therefore** I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

'Knowing God'

Jeff and I did not plan to have these two sermons come back to back, with his titled Knowing Him and now mine on Knowing God! Of course, Jeff's is the more intimate and personal of the two titles, but as we learned two weeks ago, we are to approach God as our Father and thus knowledge of God is always knowing Him if the Spirit of God dwells in us.

So, this morning I want to quickly turn to two other epistles of Paul to show the centrality of this request that he is bringing before the Throne of Grace on behalf of the Saints at Ephesus when he prays: “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...”

- And after this quick review we will turn to the practical applications that we should all have in our lives in order that we might know God as we ought.

While we could find this theme in dozens of places in the writings of Paul I want to focus on his comments to the churches at Colossi and Philippi. In the second chapter of Colossians we have Paul writing this: “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding,

to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

The conflict that Paul mentions here is where we get the idea of wrestling with God in prayer:

- IF we are to know God we must seek Him with all our hearts, and we should pray it would be so for ourselves and others in Christ.

AND the Apostle goes on to warn us about distractions we must avoid:

4 “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

5 For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

[remind them of Jeff's example]

8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Certainly, we all know how we HATE to be cheated... We are angry when someone gets the same grade we worked hard to get by cheating on a test, and we certainly check all of our finances to make sure no one is cheating us out of our money. Yet, here the Apostle warns us that we can be cheated in a much more important area and so we must keep remembering who God is...

9 “For in Him [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

Now let that sink in for just a moment: We confess and know that Jesus is God and as such is the head of all principality and power: King of Kings and Lord of Lords! But I think we choke a bit when we ponder being complete in Him! But that is exactly what the Apostle wants us to affirm and understand: A true wonder!

- We are not complete in Him in this life, but we know that this is where we are going and as such it should greatly impact how we live!

We see similar teaching in the second chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians, where after the Apostle again speaks about the Godhood of Jesus Who humbly went to the cross on our behalf he says this to those Saints:

“12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 14 Do all things without complaining & disputing,”

Now again I want us to pause and let that sink in for a moment... Which things are we to do without complaining or disputing?

- All things!

Now surely there are some things I should complain about, right? What if the boss asks me to do something beneath my skill level! Or what if Mom wants me to take out the trash when I have done it the last three times & my brother or sister is just goofing off. Brother Lewis walked by me at Church yesterday and acted like I was not even there! I could go on and on but I think you get the picture:

- When ever we complain or dispute it is sin! [yes I am convicted!]

We are at bottom thinking ourselves better than the Son of God Who left heaven, came as a man and took upon Himself the sin of the world to serve us, & He did so without complaint or dispute!

- We should remember this the next time we think we have something to complain in this life!

An important rabbit trail but not the main point of what Paul is teaching:

14 “Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life,”

[Knowing God as we ought impacts not just our lives but the world around us as well.]

Continuing on into chapter three Paul gives similar warnings about false teachers and goes on to explain how much he could boast in the flesh. Finally, he comes to this important conclusion:

7 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him...

12 “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- Now it should be pretty clear at this point that the Apostle Paul wants us to have an intimate relationship with God and to know Him very well.

Today, there is much talk in Christendom about having a personal relationship with Jesus... Yet sadly many who consider themselves to be Christians know little more about God than they do the half of their Facebook friends they have never met.

- Yes, we are to call God our Father and we are to know Him in the same way we know our human parents and other family members and close friends.

Allow me to illustrate what I mean: What if I had all of the adults here this morning stand on one side of the room and the children stand on the other: If we asked the children to pick out their parents, do you think any of them would have a problem doing that?

Or if I then divided the men and women and asked those who are married if they could pick out their spouse, could they do it consistently?

Now these may seem like silly examples...

- But just as Jesus used simple parables to drive home important truths, these types of examples can also help us learn our lessons!

Why do children know their own parents and why do husbands and wives know each other?

“Just because,” is not the right answer!

- They know them in the same way that we should know God as our Father because we are Christians!

With each child here this morning there is a birth certificate or family Bible that declares that they were born to their parents. They have been raised by these parents and have lived with them all of their lives!

With each married couple here, there was a ceremony before witnesses where vows were taken that established their marriage and began their life together. After that the marriage was consummated, and they have lived together growing to know each other more and more with each passing year.

Now stay with me for a moment so we can see the importance of the applications I am about to review:

Suppose we had a case where the parent never saw the child again after they were born [*and sadly that is easier to imagine today than in the past*].

- Would that child be able to pick their parent out of a crowd?

We could also think of some couple who went their separate ways shortly after the wedding ceremony: While they could likely still pick their spouse out of a crowd, what do you think they would know about that person twenty-five years later?

Now when the Apostle prays asking “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...” he wants us to have a rich intimate relationship and not a distant one with no interaction!

Now it is easy to think about all the ways the parents and children or husbands and wives build their relationships...

They eat meals together, they work together around the home, they take vacations together, they study together, laugh together, cry together, & do a host of other things in their everyday lives.

So as those who have taken the name of Christ in our baptisms, how do we build our relationship with God:

- Where do we meet with Him and how do we get to know Him in the way Paul prays that the Ephesians and all of us come to know Him?

There are at least four major ways that come immediately to mind... IF you are not participating in them in any significant way then you likely have that distant relationship we see far too often in other relationships here in our modern world.

- As we stress here at Church of the King, God meets us in worship when we are the Church gathered!

We should never tired of what the writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 10:

“19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love & good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, & so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

- Next, as we studied at length two weeks ago we know that God meets us in prayer.

Try to imagine human relationships where one party does not speak to the other! Those lessons on prayer are important must be taken to heart if we are to know God as we ought.

- AND we know that the conversation is not one-sided because God speaks to us through His Word.

Now let me ask the children a pretty simple question: If a distant cousin or grandparent wrote a letter to you and you did not open the letter but just put it in some special place...

- How much would you know about what was in the letter?

Well God has written to us and it would be sad if our Bibles just sat on a pretty bookshelf collecting dust, would it not?

- If you are not regularly in the Word, then you will know God no better than the relative whose letters were not opened.

However, the Bible is not the only place where God communicates with us: As Pastor Steve Wilkins rightly points out, God speaks to us and sanctifies us through the fellowship of the Saints!

- And we must remember that this is not all peaches & cream as my parents would have said!

Yes, there is great joy to be found in our Christian fellowship, but God often choses to use the more difficult situations in a Church family to teach us important lessons about patience or forgiveness.

- Such opportunities should be embraced and worked through trusting in the work of the Spirit rather than just avoiding them because it might be difficult or unpleasant.

And finally, we must not forget that God even speaks to us through His Creation

[story of Grandma Moses and her exhibits]

We are reminded about this final point and the others as well in the Psalm that comes today in our daily readings...

Psalm 19: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.

**2 Day unto day utters speech, And
night unto night reveals knowledge.**

**3 There is no speech nor language
Where their voice is not heard.**

**4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them He has
set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoices like a
strong man to run its race.**

**6 Its rising is from one end of heaven,
And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.”**

- **And unlike the pagans who sit before the wonder of creation without knowing the author of
Creation, we know Him because He has spoken:**

**7 The law of the Jehovah is perfect converting the soul;
The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple;**

**8 The statutes of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes;**

**9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether.**

**10 More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;**

Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults.

**13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins;
Let them not have dominion over me.**

**Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.**

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”

- **In all of this may we grow to know God more and more each and every day of our lives!**
- **Remembering that our children and the world are watching!**

Communion Meditation: Genesis 18

**“16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them
on the way. 17 And Jehovah said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall
surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?**

**19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that
they keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice, that Jehovah may bring to Abraham what
He has spoken to him.””**