

Eternal Life

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, we so desperately need your Holy Spirit to work in the depths of who we are, to bring your word to the depths of who we are, to help us to understand the gospel at the very depths of who we are.

And so we ask that you would do that ongoing wonderful work in our lives so that we might be free and we might glorify you and enjoy you forever.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. I'm actually a pretty quiet guy, but I get paid to speak on Sundays and other types of times.

And of course, in a sense, I get paid, so to speak, to speak to people. So there's lots of times that without intending to, I offend people. I'm going to share a story of a friend of mine who was speaking to a group of people, and he was under the impression that everybody who was there was a Christian.

And what he didn't know was that there were four or five Orthodox Jews who were there, or at least very conservative Jews. They didn't have the, you know, all that stuff that some Orthodox Jews wear, but they were very conservative Jews.

[1 : 17] And they were wearing kippahs, but he didn't notice this. And he was actually reading a text from John's Gospel. And some of you might be familiar that in John's Gospel, one of the ways that John refers to Jewish people is as the Jews.

And it's, in a sense, the job of the pastor or the Bible study leader or the preacher to help people to understand what that particular word means.

It's a literal translation of a word that John uses. But this fellow, he didn't do that. And he kept reading the text. It was a good expository thing of the text.

And he kept using the word the Jews, the Jews, the Jews, the Jews, the Jews, all the way through without helping the congregation, and especially without helping the four or five Jewish people who were there understand what was being said.

So it actually sounded, the whole point of the sermon to them was that it was as if we Christians were blaming the Jews on every bad thing that happened to Jesus.

[2 : 16] And they were quite offended. They were very, very bothered by it. It was a real, just unfortunate, missed opportunity. And especially because with a couple of simple things, the speaker could have clarified, amongst other things, that Jesus was Jewish, that John was Jewish.

I'm surprised how many Jewish people are surprised to find out that every book in the New Testament, with the exception of Luke and Acts, was written by a Jewish man. And it catches them by surprise when you tell them that.

And it just, it brought needless offense. And I'm sure I could have also, I'm sure you could probably give me examples of times that I spoke and I offended you without realizing it, or I offended one of your friends.

The text of Scripture that we're going to be looking at today, it's something I've almost talked about quite a few times, but there's a way that Jesus talks and prays that Christians find very precious, but that is deeply offensive to a lot of people in Canada.

And it's going to come up very, very powerfully in this prayer, especially at the beginning, at the end, but the verses that we're going to look at right now. So it'd be a great help. We're going to look at the text, and then we're going to sort of, just a very short text this morning, and then we're going to sort of camp in it, look at it a little bit more deeply as to why it is that Jesus used this language, and whether there's a way that we could get around it to make it a little bit less offensive.

[3 : 45] And so John chapter 17, it's verses 1 to 5, and I think Andrew's going to have the text up on the screen. You know, we put the text on the screen because it's very helpful for a lot of you, but

I really want to encourage you to bring your own Bibles to church.

You know, if you're the type who likes to make little notes in them, it's just there's something about having your own copy of the word or your own version that you can refer to, but the words are going to be on the screen. So it's just five verses, and it goes like this.

And so just if you remember, if you're a guest, you might not know this, we're coming to the end of John's Gospel. Judas is left to betray Jesus. Probably even as Jesus is speaking, the troops are getting their swords and their stuff on, and they're heading to where Judas knows that Jesus is going to be in a short while, or some time that evening he knows that Jesus is going to be in a certain garden.

And so even as Jesus is talking, the troops and the betrayer are moving ahead of Jesus to wait for Jesus to capture him. And Jesus knows that this is happening.

He knows that he's going to die on the cross the next day. And this is, in a sense, his final prayer of consecration of himself, of his disciples, and he's also praying for you and me.

[5 : 05] And these three sort of elements of praying in terms of just consecrating himself this prayer for the disciples who are literally right in front of him.

And literally, I believe this very literally, literally Jesus is looking down the ages and he sees you and me sitting here on a Sunday morning in an ice storm in postmodern, post-industrial, advanced capitalist Canada.

And he's praying for you and me as well. And those three types of things weave in and out of this prayer in a very, very beautiful and complex way with very simple childlike language.

And here we'll just look at the first five verses, the first sort of grouping of the text. And it goes like this. When Jesus had spoken these words, these words of comfort and challenge and exhortation, these words that he is having victory over the world, when Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and he said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. Now just sort of pause. Here's the thing which all the way through John's Gospel, one of the main ways that Jesus refers to God as his Father.

[6 : 26] And that's very simple and not that controversial in a room like this for most of us. But you could well imagine that if you got invited by some friends to maybe lead a Bible study for some inquirers at church, and you would have many, not just women but men, wonder why it is that you call God Father.

And why is all this masculine imagery? And maybe there would be a time when you're leading a Bible study at a university, at your workplace, and you come to this and you happen to know that maybe there's a woman or a man in the group who aren't Christians who were terribly abused by their dad, that were sexually abused by their father.

And you'd come to say this, and it might very well be if you have emotional intelligence, and you're just conscious of this big issue of abuse in the person's life, and you come to the word father, and you might hesitate in saying it.

You might wish that you'd chosen another text. You might wonder, like I said to you, my friend, there was a simple way that he could have used, every time he said the Jews, there was a simple explanation he could have done to bring the meaning of the text out in a way that wouldn't offend Orthodox Jewish or just any Jewish person.

It wouldn't offend them. with a couple of simple explanatory things. And you might wonder if this is a place where you should say, mother, the hour has come. And maybe to substitute child for son.

[8 : 16] Because it's not just amongst people who've been sexually abused by their dad, and it's not just in the queer studies or feminist studies or women's studies departments. It's a very, very common thing in our culture to be just deeply bothered by using this language of father.

And I just want to highlight it for you. And I'm going to circle around. We're going to return to it.

There's been quite a few times I thought I wanted to talk about it, but we need to grasp this. And actually, believe it or not, if we grasp why it is that Jesus is saying father, it actually helps us to enter into, in a far deeper way, everything that's going on in this text.

All of the theology, all of this whole thing about the gospel, which is just so wonderful, that actually fulfills the longings and yearnings of feminists, of social justice warriors, of capitalists, of the broken, of the successful.

The gospel is the end of the longings and yearnings, the true deep longings and yearnings of our hearts. It is an answer to the hurts and the wounds and the brokenness.

It is the answer to our sins. And I just want to highlight to you that this is such a hard term for people and say, but if we're going to circle back and we're going to look at it, and as we start to pierce into the heart of Jesus in the language, we realize that it's revealing the heart of Jesus.

[9 : 53] In a very powerful way. You just said right now, we'll come back to it. Don't worry about it. Well, I'll read that last part of verse one again. Father, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, for you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Now just pause here for a second. There's a very, very wonderful little contrast here in the verse. If you look up at verse two, since you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

It's a very, very wonderful little contrast here between these two things, because even in our language, the word flesh tells us about something very earthy and physical.

[11 : 00] Flesh. It doesn't say you've given authority over all spirits, or all minds, or all consciousnesses. It uses this word flesh. And in John's language, in the Gospel of John, whenever John uses this word flesh, he wants us to understand fully the frailty and the weakness and just the ordinary aspect of human life.

You know, I don't know if they give, I'd never tell this to my interns, you know, but I've heard supposedly that they tell people, like, if you're worried about speaking, just imagine all the people with no clothes on, so to speak, that they're just ordinary people underneath maybe their \$4,000 suits and their \$3,000 handbags.

Could be this person with the suit has the handbag or it could be different sexes. And you just try to get at the ordinariness of them. But this, I don't know if that is something, the advice that they give, I don't know if it would help if you did give that advice, but there's this wonderful contrast here in John about the fact that Jesus, God the Father, has given authority over all human beings.

And human beings are flesh. We are born, babies are spectacularly demanding and spectacularly helpless.

And we're just frail. I drove Barbara Allen home. If I move my arm a certain way and I look like I'm wincing, I had a really bad fall, actually, coming in here.

[12 : 36] Many of you may be, some of you may be had a bad fall. I think I might have actually bruised a rib because I really fell hard. And it's, I was just thinking about that while I was praying before the service that in some ways God wanted me to remember that I'm flesh as I get to speak.

I'm frail. I'm one virus away from death. I am one car accident or slip away from death. We are flesh. But it's flesh that gets eternal life. This wonderful contrast, eternal life to flesh.

And verse 3, verse 3, and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. In some ways, that's the, my main point for the whole sermon is just for you folks and myself to grasp the wonder and the beauty and the power and the relevance of that line.

At first, it sounds kooky. Like, it sort of sounds like, okay, George, you're saying something like if you know that 2 plus 2 equals 4, you have eternal life?

If you just know Jesus and God, you have eternal life? Like, that doesn't seem to make any sense. It sounds like it's a bit of a kooky type of thing. Like, why on earth would eternal life depend upon knowing a couple of things about Jesus and God?

[13 : 59] But once again, in that which looks like it's sort of very confusing and doesn't actually make much sense and just looks ridiculous, when we pause and actually listen to what Jesus is saying, we see how, in fact, this text is, it is the end of our longings and our yearnings, and it is better than religion, it's better than spirituality, and it's better than irreligion, and it's just very powerful.

But let's finish the verse, this section. I'll read verse 3 again, and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

It's the only time in the Bible, by the way, that Jesus refers to himself as Jesus Christ. Only time Jesus refers to himself that way. Verse 4, I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do, and now, Father, see, once again, he uses that word, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

It's a very, very, you know, very, very powerful text. Now, so here's the, here's the problem, you know, right off the, we'll go right back to the problem. I mean, there's just so much problem around this text, right?

Like, why is it that Jesus calls God Father? Like, doesn't Jesus know, like, if Jesus is God, shouldn't he know that even back in his day, there were dads who were sexually abusing or physically abusing their kids?

[15:33] Like, even in Jesus's day, didn't he know that there were just terrible, horrible, absent dads? And even if he didn't know that that was there, if he's God, like, wouldn't he know that that's going on right now?

And, and why would he choose a word that's so offensive? And what about all that other stuff? Like, I already mentioned, like, why is it that our eternal destiny just hangs on whether or not we know something?

Like, that just seems, like, odd. Like, it sounds like, I don't know, like, there's a secret handshake to get into a certain organization, and if I teach you the secret handshake, then you're part of this inner club and inner circle that other people can't be, and maybe is it the same thing?

You get to know the code word, the password, and those select few who know the password, they get in, and it has nothing to do with anything else. And why is this, all this stuff about, excuse me, glorifying?

Like, why is it that God seems to be addicted to getting said, you're really good, you're really good? Like, it just sounds like lots of this text, you can just, like, a lot of this text is just, it seems a bit odd.

[16:39] It would seem very odd to Canadians. And, and, and part of the problem for many of us who've been Christians for a long time, the text is so wonderful to us, we don't realize how weird it sounds to others.

So, let's just begin with, with one of them. If you could put up the, the, the, the text, Andrew, my, my big point, you're going to see this like four or five times throughout the rest of the, the, my time up here.

This is eternal life, that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom, whom you, whom you have sent. So, how about this language of God and calling God father?

And, and all this other talk about knowing. We just need to actually just pause for a second and just think about a little bit about what it means to know something.

And, and it's very, very helpful if you think in a sense of types of things that you know by types. And so, if you think about the difference between knowing a rock or a pebble, let's, we'll use the word pebble, knowing a pebble, knowing a bug, knowing a dog, knowing a person, and knowing God.

[18:01] And if you think about these things a little bit, you'll start to get a little bit of an understanding and appreciation for what it is that Jesus is doing all the way, all the times that he talks.

Now, I'm not a science type here. There might very well be somebody here who has a degree in geology, or a degree in physics, or a degree in chemistry, or, or something like that.

But basically, if you want to know a pebble, if you want to know about a pebble, the pebble is, well, the pebble is a pebble. It can't run away. It can't hide.

It can't pretend. In fact, you know that everything about knowing the pebble all comes from you.

And, and so, you know, and it can't, the pebble can't resist you knowing about it.

All of the, all of the effort of knowing flows from you. And so, you know, if you, you, you, you really want to understand the pebble, you might bring in some geologists to identify the pebble, and you might, you know, you might subject it to x-rays or other types of things to see, what's inside of it.

[19:04] And, and you could maybe see if there's some metal in it by waving a metal detector over it. And you could weigh it. And, and you could take photographs of it. And all of the effort of knowing the pebble, it all flows from you.

And the pebble is just, it's just a pebble. Now you take something a little bit different. Take something like a bug. And once again, when it comes to knowing a bug, almost everything, virtually everything about knowing the bug comes from you.

The bug contributes nothing. The only difference is, well, you might have a hard time catching the bug. Because bugs move, generally.

It might be that some people want to know the bug, are afraid of bugs, and, and that, that's not really the bug's fault. But the main thing is the bug can move and a bug can die. And they do die.

But apart from those simple things, once you catch the bug, and, and then you might actually catch three or four bugs, and a couple of them you kill, so you can rip them apart and see what they're like inside. And, and others you just study how they move.

[20 : 06] And it might be that they're hard sometimes to study in their movement, because they don't move if they think they're being watched. But fundamentally, like, virtually everything about knowing the bug, all comes from you. The bug does some things without being conscious of it, that frustrates your knowledge.

But, but fundamentally, everything that comes from you, about the knowledge, comes from you. The bug doesn't know you at all. The bug is just a bug. Now we move to a dog. And now dogs are a little bit different than this.

I don't know how many of you are dog people, but I know there's at least a couple of dog people in the room. And, and, and everybody will tell you, like, you know, I, I know people who'd say, why do I want a boyfriend?

Like a dog is a lot better. Dogs always happy to see you. They never get into arguments with you. They're always friendly. And there's all these wonderful things about, about dogs that are just so, just so wonderful.

And, and, and you can get to know the dog, but there really is a sense that the dog also plays some role in you getting to know the dog. I mean, the dog could bite you or run away. You know, you could get a dog that's been physically abused and you've, you've, you've rescued the dog.

[21 : 11] And it's going to take you a lot to really get to know the dog, because the dog has been so terribly wounded. And, and still most of the knowing of the dog comes from you, but still the dog has an actual role in being known.

And the dog actually, in some ways can reveal himself or herself to you. And there actually is a different relationship that can develop between something like a dog and a human being. And the same could be said about a cat or a horse or some of the higher animals, that there is really, in a sense, something that is in that other, that dog that has to be open to being known, that is necessary for you and me to know the dog.

Now we move to human beings. Human beings are very, very different than knowing a bug, knowing a pebble, and knowing a dog. I, when I was the first 10 or 15 years, because I'm a very slow learner, I, I sort of felt that I had to go to every wedding.

When I did the wedding and I got, you know, I could do the wedding and they invite me to the reception. And, and for the first 15 years or so, because it was how I was trained, I went to every wedding reception when I did the wedding. It took me a while to realize I said, I should stop doing that.

[22 : 22] Because, you know, a lot of times, because I was doing a lot of weddings for people who didn't go to the church and they didn't know me, they liked the building or whatever, and I would do the wedding. And it took me a long time to realize that on one level, they were actually happier if I didn't go to the wedding.

Because, like, you go to the wedding reception, what do you do with the priest? Like, oh, dear, he's coming. I was hoping he wouldn't. I mean, they say, oh, we really hope you come. We'll be so sad if you don't.

But then when you don't, they forget that you said no, and they're actually probably happy. So what would often happen? Well, I think there was a movie a few years ago about all the rejects, like the people they hoped, they wouldn't come to the wedding and they all get to sit at a table.

Anyway, I go to that table. That's who the minister goes to when it's a secular wedding and I did their ceremony and they want me to go. And I'm at that table, right? And so sometimes what it means is they pick the kooky people that nobody wants to sit with, and I sit with them.

Nothing personal. The kooky people are the hyper charismatic aunt, or maybe the fundamentalist uncle, or the person who's really into crystals or talking to ghosts or, you know, whatever.

[23 : 33] And, or often it's the 90 year olds who haven't brought their hearing aid, who just sort of sit there, you know, 95 year old, and they're drooling.

And I'm, I'm with them, right? Because I'm at the table where they don't want to put all the people they wished had said, no, I'm at that table, right? And, and so sometimes I'm at these table, I was at these tables.

And, and the reason I'm there isn't because I actually thought when I met what they thought was a kooky, charismatic, we'd have a great time. Like that was spectacular. Or the fundamentalist that they didn't like.

And I sit with them, I'd have a spectacular time with them, right? They didn't know I'm like a kooky, charismatic fundamentalist. They didn't know that about me, right? But I am by their definitions. That's what I was.

So I was actually with a brother or a sister, but sometimes it would be with the people who had like zero social skill. In fact, their social skills were in the negatives, not the naughty. Zero would be a step up, five steps up from where they were.

[24 : 31] And so you're sitting at this table with these people who are unbelievably introverted or whatever, and you try to start a conversation with them.

And they give grunt answers or don't answer at all, or every answer is a no or a yes. And I'm here trying to make conversation with them, getting completely and utterly exhausted, looking at my watch, wondering, what on earth can I leave politely now that I'm here?

I don't go to, you know, I only go to weddings with people I know now, even if I've done the wedding ceremony. Anyway, but the point of all of this is this, other than you think, George, why did you go to so many wedding receptions like that?

But the point is this, if I'm sitting beside somebody at a wedding reception, and they don't want to be known, I cannot know them. I can know a few superficial things about them.

I might be able to tell a police officer afterwards, you know, whether they were African American, or whether they were Asian, or, you know, whether, you know, whether they were tall or short or old or young.

[25 : 38] I might know a few, like, irrelevant things about them, but if they don't want me to know them, I cannot know them. They can ignore me. They can tell lies to me.

They can, I need them to reveal themselves to me, if I'm going to know them. That's how it is with people, isn't it? I need them to, I need to reveal some things about myself.

They need to reveal some things about themselves. There has to be this, in a sense, opening of ourselves to each other, a giving of information, and a willingness to be known for me to know another, human being.

So remember where we've gone. We've gone from the pebble, to the bug, to the dog, to the person. Now we go to God. And if there is a God who really does exist, who is anything at all, like the way Jesus describes him, then you'll see, well, actually, you know what you'll see?

Here's the hard thing to think about. I have more in common with a pebble than I have in common with God. I'm finite.

[26 : 52] God is not just big. He's infinite. I live in time. God created time and doesn't live in time. I need an environment to live in.

God doesn't need any environment to live in. I have a beginning and an end. God has no beginning and no end.

I can only know a few types of things, very limited. God knows everything. And you could go on and on and on and on. I am physical with a soul.

God, well, God is God. Doesn't have a body part, body or parts. Doesn't have passions. The fact of the matter is, is that there is more in common between me and a pebble than there is between me and God.

And if that is the case, then if, if just to merely know another human being, I need that human being to reveal something about themselves to me.

[27 : 56] They need to be willing to be known if I am to know them. And I have to be willing to be, I have to be willing to know them and to be known myself if there's going to be any real knowledge that goes on.

In the case of God, at a most fundamental level, everything about knowing God has to come from God.

Everything. And when I mean everything, I mean literally everything. With nothing left out, it all has to come from God. None of it can come from me. And in fact, actually, if God was a very, very cruel God, he could just sort of force openness in me.

It's only because it's something about the nature of God as revealed by Jesus that we'll talk about in a couple of minutes that the fact of the matter is that God actually wants me to know him. He

doesn't force me.

It's not like a demonic, possession. He's made me to be free. He's made me to have a will. He's made me to want to know him.

[29 : 09] But unless God reveals himself to me and to you, I can't know anything about God without him revealing himself to me.

And so I guess what I want to say about this is this. If you could put up the first point, Andrew, it is because God is personal that you cannot invent ways to address him.

It is because God is personal that you cannot invent ways to address him. I could call a rock anything I want.

I could call a bug anything I want. I could step on the bug if I wanted. I could call a dog anything I want. Actually, I can't call a human being anything I want.

I mean, if I called Daniel a girl, he'd be offended. And he's way bigger and stronger than me as well. You know, and if I called him, I don't know, Betty or something like that, he wouldn't answer.

[30 : 15] If he did, it would be very rude or something like that. And he should do something like that. You know, I'm limited in that. But it's precisely because God is God and the way that Jesus is trying to reveal who God is, he's revealing a God who is infinite, who is a person.

It's precisely because God is personal. That we are completely and utterly dependent upon God to reveal himself to us. And I can't just take the words of Jesus and say, I'm going to substitute mother every time he says father.

And I'm going to substitute child every time he says son because then what I'm doing is I'm just in, I can't, if God is personal, you can't, you get the point, you can't do it.

Now, some other point in time, we, not now, we can talk, all we can do is try to guess why it is that Jesus, I mean Jesus, Jesus lived at a time when there were goddesses everywhere.

Like it wasn't as if he went, as if you could go up to Jesus now and he'd go, oh, duh, there's goddesses? I didn't know that. You mean I'm permitted to call God? Oh, no. Goddesses were everywhere.

[31 : 30] And he just even had to read his Old Testament to have language of goddesses. He knew that, but God, why did God choose father? I don't entirely, I don't know. I just know that he did and he did it because he knows you and me and he knows, and I could give you some guesses as to why God used this language to reveal it, but it's a very, very personal word.

It's even more personal because father is a very, very good translation, but the actual word is the adult word, the adult intimate word that a child would use of their, like an adult child would use of their father.

Actually, I shouldn't say adult. It's what anybody at your stage of life would use to address your father. father. And the translation is right to use the word father because for some of you, I mean, I would call my dad, dad.

And some of you might call your dad, daddy. And some of you might use other types of language, but it's actually, the word is actually the intimate, personal form of private address between a child and their father.

That's actually the Greek word that's used. And it's a word that beckons us into a relationship with God. And we can't correct it.

[32 : 46] All we can do is say, Jesus, you knew, for some of us, all we can say is, Jesus, you knew what my earthly father was like.

And I don't know, I don't know, Jesus, why you use this language, but I know that you know me and you know me so well that you died on the cross for me, you love me so much you're willing to die for me.

And I don't know why you use this language and I'm willing to walk with you, Jesus. I ask that you would reveal this to me, that you would bring healing so that I could use this word. I understand why some of us have to pray that prayer.

That's fine. But we can't replace it. Jesus gives this language because he loves us.

Well, in some of your case, George, well that's very interesting, but what about this whole problem with glory? Like, why is it that we've seen that? Like, if you could put up the scripture text again, Andrew, I'll just say that the main point here, this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

[33 : 57] But if you look at all the language around it, like, those of you who have your Bibles, you know, verse 1, glorify your son that your son may glorify you. You've given him authority over all flesh. You know, in verse 6, verse 5, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before all of the world was, you know, before there was world.

And all this language of authority and glory and all that, like, like, does God have some type of a problem that he needs to always be, like, using language like this?

Andrew, if you could put up the next point that would be helpful. And it's this, actually, my last four points, I have to be, well, I'm going to really have to rush. Sorry. They're going to be questions. If living an impersonal life is to be avoided, why do you want to live with an impersonal God? If living an impersonal life is to be avoided, why do you want to live with an impersonal God?

I almost wanted to name this point, who would choose to live with a toaster rather than a person? Who would choose to live with a toaster rather than a person?

[35 : 12] You see, this language of the point that it is, this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Most of the analogies that our culture uses for God are basically impersonal images. The Star Wars movies, it talks about the force.

Most Buddhism and Eastern religions, the analogy that will be used for who God is is that God is like all things which is impersonal. That when you finish the cycle of reincarnation and reincarnation and reincarnation, what happens is that a human being is like a drop of water and the drop of water finally merges with the ocean so the ocean is the image of God and the fundamental image of a human being is like a drop of water which is impersonal and the impersonal drop of water gets merged with the impersonal ocean and most of the images that we use in our culture about God, we use language of like it's that God is like light, God is like a force, God is like all of nature and it's all impersonal, impersonal language.

Yet the problem is that none of us wants to live like if we had everything, if we were stuck in solitary confinement and all of the food that just came to us just came by a machine through the door, we would experience that as cruel and unusual punishment.

We would understand that if you were to completely and utterly lost to dealing and spending the rest of your life without any type of human contact or personal contact and all you had were walls and all you had were things and there was no human being to talk to, not even a dog to give you some comfort but completely and utterly impersonal, we wouldn't want that.

[37 : 23] But at the same time, we have this image of God as if it's something like a pebble, like a thing, not even a bug but like a pebble. But, and this is, by the way, all the way through the Old Testament a constant thing about idolatry.

There's these wonderful texts that happens a couple of times where the prophet says, like, don't you folks understand what you're doing? You go to a tree in the forest and you cut down the tree and out of the tree that you cut down, part of it you make a fire out of and the other part you make an idol out of it, this dead wood you make an idol out of it and you bow down and worship dead wood.

Like, what's wrong with this picture of you thinking that God is something like a rock or dead wood that you would bow down to worship? And the wonderful thing about Jesus here and about the gospel is that if we think about it nobody would want to have such an impersonal future.

We would really think it was cruel and unusual punishment if there was a prison that you sent somebody to that meant they would never even have a single word, a single human contact for the entire rest of their life until they died.

All of the food would be brought by machines in a room without ever seeing a human being and we would view that as cruel and unusual punishment because it's a completely impersonal future yet we desire as a culture an impersonal God.

[38 : 48] Why does that make any sense? Because we understand the value of a person and Jesus is revealing a God who is a personal God who loves you and wants to be known.

Could you put the scripture text up again please Andrew? I have to go through these far more quickly than I thought. This is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

But what about this problem of God wanting to be glorified and God wanting to be praised? Could you put up the next point Andrew please? Here's in terms of a question.

If you look down on a person who always needs to be praised how can you look up to a God who always needs to be praised? Now this is what's so wonderful about what Jesus is saying and what he is revealing about the nature of God.

To our Jewish friends and our Muslim friends I do not know how they would answer this question. Because the fact of the matter is if you had a child or a friend and they came to the point where you always had to praise them they always had to be praised time and time and time and time and time again you would look down your nose at them.

[40 : 15] And I don't know how Jewish people and how Muslims would answer this but you see here's the wonderful thing about the gospel. And if you look back in the text Jesus describes how from all eternity the Father was glorifying the Son and from all eternity the Son was glorifying the Father and they don't need any human being to give them praise.

It's not because God has a lack it's not as if God the Father is saying dang it Jesus doesn't give me enough praise like I want more like come on give more Jesus just isn't doing the Son of God isn't giving me enough praise I think I'm going to create George and Daniel and Anne and a few other people so they can top up what Jesus God the Son of God just isn't able to give no that's not how it works at all.

Even the language of glory the language of glorifying is about a matter about honoring it's a matter about recognizing worth it's a matter of recognizing just this profound value that when we want to glorify something we want to praise something it's because there's a depth a wonder a value and so from all eternity the God the Father was saying that the huge value of the person of God the Son of God and how worthy he was to be honored and he said you are just to be praised and to honored and glorified and the Father doesn't view this as a lack that all of eternity he is glorifying the Son and the Son doesn't view it as any type of lack or need in him that from all it just seems that God the Father is so worthy he is so wonderful and is so worthy for the Son to say to glorify him and so from all eternity the Father is glorifying and giving worth and honor and praise to the Father and the Father to the Son and then

God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit three persons one God from all eternity they create human beings and human beings are meant not just to live all by themselves but to live male and female and to have families and to live in communities and to have churches and have organizations and God the Father God the Son God the Holy Spirit is not saying oh I am so needy I am so needy he's saying no from all eternity there's this fullness of love this fullness of praise this fullness of giving of glory and we want you flesh to come and enter into this out of our fullness we desire you to enter into this you could put up the scripture text again Andrew this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent well what about this whole problem of knowledge if you could put up point number four the problem is that when remember I went through the beginning about the whole thing about the difference between knowing a pebble and knowing a bug and knowing a dog and knowing a person and knowing God and you realize that in knowing a person you're changed if knowing a person changes you how much more must knowing the personal God

I can't even begin to count the different ways that my life is different from knowing my wife it would be impossible for anybody to trace back we've been married 37 years what George would be like without knowing having ever met Louise than it would be to know him now for me to have spent 37 years knowing her like you can't know a person without being changed and if knowing a person is all about opening yourself to the other person and at the same time the other person opens themselves to you and in some way you enter into the other person in some way they enter into you and you're changed and as I've shared with you before that's why it is so common when a loved one dies whether it's a child or your wife or your husband it often feels for people as if there is now a hollow spot inside of you that something's left you because you're changed by knowing a person and so what

[44 : 44] Jesus is saying here is once again just helping us to understand this personal God and it just makes sense if knowing Louise changes me how much more must knowing God change me you could put up the scripture text Andrew this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent and now if you could put up the point again Andrew the final point if knowing a wonderful person feels like a gift how much more must it be a real and true gift to know God if knowing a wonderful person feels like a gift how much more must it be a real and true gift to know God I'm not just talking about some famous people that I've known I you know I've

been at some gatherings and you see this person you can just tell maybe they just radiate goodness or they just radiate wisdom wisdom and then they say want to have coffee and I

I'll tell you this I just feel so unworthy I'll call up Louise and say I just feel so unworthy that they'd actually want to talk to me like it just feels like this act of grace or gift that they would want to spend time with me and get to know me and not just to spend time with me so they could talk about their accomplishments or how wonderful they are but here this person whether it's a person of great accomplishment or just a person of great goodness or great holiness or great wisdom and they want to actually spend time with me and I feel like I have been given a profound gift and if that is true just with a person how much more true must it be of God and that's what Jesus means by saying that only he can give this eternal life only he can give this knowledge of God you know by our normal ways of thinking about things as I've already shared we tend to think of God as an impersonal force and often when we think of

God in personal ways we get very very frightened we worry that God is going to hurt us we worry that he's all about ego and the fact of the matter is that no train of secular thought no train of secular wisdom no train of ordinary religion no train of ordinary spirituality will ever say that the way that God is going to fully reveal himself and make himself known is by setting aside his honor and glory and splendor and divine prerogatives and entering among us to live a fully human life and then to die upon the cross bearing in his person your sin and mine your shame and mine your death and mine your doom and mine no train of natural thought would ever lead us to understand that that is the revelation of the glory of God only Jesus reveals the God that really does exist and it is not in keeping with any train of spiritual thought or rash or wisdom and so this wonderful thing is that when I reach out with my mind or my heart or my arm to recognize that Jesus is the one who can reconcile me to God and I need him as my savior and my mind cannot reach Jesus my heart cannot reach Jesus my will cannot reach Jesus my hand cannot reach Jesus because there is an infinite distance between me and him but the wonder of the gospel is that Jesus crosses that infinite distance that I cannot cross and he comes to my mind he comes to my heart he comes to my will he comes to my hand he comes to my body and as my hand touches his hand that is crossed to come across such infinite space and I touch him there's not only the sense that he becomes in a sense my substitute it's not just that he becomes in a sense where I exchange my doom for his destiny it is also a touching of him by which I now start to know God and to be known by him and to know God is a gift of the grace of

Jesus and it is this knowledge of him is eternal life that is the change that it works within me that even though I walk around right now even as I stand with normal earthly human life when I put my hand in the hand of Jesus when I put my mind on Jesus when I give my heart and my will to Jesus and he really always takes any offer to give ourselves to him he always takes it that at the same time that I have an earthly life I now have received an eternal life which means a life that only comes from God that begins now and at the moment of my death what my family and my friends will see as my death is actually the moment that eternal life swallows my earthly life so that all that I have left is this eternal life of knowing

[50 : 19] God and being known by him I invite you to stand and you know here's the wonderful thing about this image that eternal life if you could put up the scripture text perfect Andrew this is eternal life that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent salvation begins when you know God for the first time I've been married to Louise for 37 years I'm still learning to know her and and so this is a time for God's people to cry out and say father I don't want to just know about you but I do want to know about you but I want to know you and I want to be known by you and I want to know you more and more and more and have you know me more and more and more in the power of the

Holy Spirit and this is the time for us as God's people to call out to God just to ask to know him more and to be known by him more and to know that we have a dad in heaven who loves us who hears our prayers who answers our prayers as we pour out our hearts to him let's pray father if there are any here who are hesitating to call out to you for the first time to have Jesus as their Lord and Savior to come and to touch them and to help them to know you and to know him father I ask that your Holy Spirit would move in their hearts and lives that this might be that time when they say Jesus I'm here I want to be yours I want to know you and be known by you I want to know the father and be known by him and father if there are any here who are really struggling with abusive dads and have problems with the language I ask that you would pour out the

Holy Spirit with might and power and deep conviction upon us that we might pour out our hearts father to you we might know healing and father for every one of us we know how in our personal relationships there's times when we can just be indifferent and we can take people for granted and we know that can happen with our relationship with you we thank you father you never let us go we ask father that you would pour out the Holy Spirit upon us with might and power and deep conviction to fan into flame within us a longing and yearning to know about you and to know you and to be known by you to know you not just the appearances but to to know you in reality not just in make believe but to know you in reality and to know you more and more and more and more and more and fan into flame within us father such a desire in the midst of our earthly life in the midst of our jobs and our tasks and our chores and our relationships to know you to be known by you father pour out your

Holy Spirit upon us that we might know the father you and we might know Jesus more and more and more and more and all of God's people said Amen