

Knowing Christ The One Thing

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0:00] Pastor Shearer, these people here are the preacher's prayer team.

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Pastor Tim mentioned this. Consistently, each of you that have come up to me have said, I want you to know we're praying for you. So not only is this a worshipping church, but this is a praying church.

And I know this is also a church of the Word of God. A church that is committed to the Scripture.

What else can we be committed to? I think it was the Apostle Peter in John chapter 6, where Jesus is saying some hard words.

And a number of His disciples end up leaving Him from that day forward. Jesus turns to His disciples and says, Will you go too? Peter turns and says, But Jesus, You alone have the words of life.

[1:49] This word of life, the Scripture that we know and learn about is really ultimate for us as Christians, so that we can know Him.

That is the theme this morning, so thank you for the last song. Knowing Christ, knowing Him. That's what we sang about, and that's what we'll learn about this morning.

The same passage, the groups of verses that we just were put to music, and that we had the privilege of singing together, are the words that we'll also look at in digest for the next several minutes.

Well, August 5th, 2016, in Rio de Janeiro. What's happening there? What's that? Oh, you are on top of it. The Summer Olympics.

Man, I love, I love the Summer Olympics. I love being able to watch people who have spent time, invested hours and hours of training to make sure that they can commit themselves to this task and be able to compete in some way.

[2:55] Now, for those of you who have done any sports or been involved in any athletics, you know that Olympics training didn't start this year. It's been a lifelong journey of training and developing their body and investing not only time in terms of the skill itself, but also the diet and the sleeping and the rigor that's involved.

But in order to excel in any area of sports, they can't diversify. They have to be tuned in and focused on one specific goal.

You wouldn't find somebody who is competing in track. You wouldn't find them out in the rowboat also with the Olympic row team. You wouldn't find somebody who is given to gymnastics.

You wouldn't find them doing laps in the pool, competing in the sprints. You wouldn't find somebody who's gifted with tennis hanging out with the Greco wrestling team, you know.

If they want to excel in their given sport and if they want to succeed, they're going to give themselves to one focus, to one task, to one sport.

[4:16] They're going to become the very best in that one activity. I don't know about you, but in this life, sometimes I find myself getting overwhelmed.

I get overwhelmed with all of the things that I'm called to do and I'm called to excel in. Like, you know, we're called to excel as fathers or we're called to excel as husbands.

We've got to make sure our kids succeed and so that they're doing the very best in athletics or they're doing their very best in academics or whatever field that they're in. That's on us to make sure that we're giving them the opportunities to do that.

Or we have to be the very best in our field of work, whatever that might be. And then you bring it home and you've got to have the best landscaping yard, the perfectly manicured bushes and the greenery around and the flowers.

So you've got to excel in the gardening and excel in mechanics and so you've got your car and you've tricked it out in whatever way. Every single field, you have to be this jack of all trades but we know what the result of that is.

[5 : 28] Master of none. You ever find yourself getting overwhelmed in life? You find yourself losing the focus of life, wondering what you are really here for, wondering how you can really make it through.

Well, this morning, I want to direct our attention to Philippians chapter 3. Because in Philippians chapter 3, we're going to find the one thing.

That's encouraging to me. It's great to have one focus, one aim, one objective, one means of measuring life, one expectation, one criteria to assess all of life, one deliverable, as it were, one set of expectations that you're going to be evaluated on.

The accountability of your life is measured by this one thing. Every aspect of life that seeks to deepen this one quality, this one commitment that you will have as an individual.

And one if this one thing could secure your hope, could lead to power in the Christian life, could guard your sense of fulfillment, could remove the pressure and lead to freedom, could set before you a clear purpose, one overarching pursuit of life, and also lead to peace, to joy, to satisfaction, and to pleasure of God.

[7 : 17] Would that be one thing worth pursuing? Oh, I think it would be worth pursuing. Paul talks about that. He begins in chapter 3, verses 13 and 14, as we see that Paul is moving towards one goal.

He says, one thing I do. Ah, ding, ding, ding. Attention. One thing I do. What is it, Paul? Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Okay. So what is the one thing? Well, we know that one thing involves knowledge because there is a forgetting what is behind. But that one thing also involves action because there is a pressing on. There is movement. There is direction in life. So what is that one thing? Well, if we back up to verse 12, we can see this repeated word.

He's pressing on to a goal. And in verse 12, we turn to Philippians. verse 12, verse 12, verse 12, verse 12, verse 12, not that I've already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.

[8 : 42] Okay, so we're moving our way back up into the passage and we're coming closer to the one thing. And we notice here in verse 12, this is a continuation of the beginning of this chapter.

So what is that one thing? Well, we find that one thing in verses 7 through 11 and we'll concentrate our attention this morning on verses 10 and 11.

But let me read for us this morning verses 7 to 11. Here's what it says. But whatever gain I had, I counted loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith. Here it is. That I may know Him. and the power of His resurrection and may share in His sufferings becoming like Him in His death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

[10 : 07] We find from the Apostle Paul this one thing that leads to all of these other things. It leads to pursuit of God. It leads to the prize. The goal of heaven is the pursuit of knowledge, of knowing Him.

We see that here in the beginning verses. In verse 8, I count everything loss for the surpassing worth of what church? Of knowing Christ.

And here again in verse 10, that I may know Him. But the pursuit of knowledge demands at least two things.

First, the pursuit of knowledge demands an exchange. An exchange that we see there in verses 7 and 8. Notice the repeated terms, the gaining and the losing and the counting that is taking place in those verses.

At the beginning of verse 7, there's this initial gain that Paul is crediting to his account, but then he's counting it loss. At the end of verse 8, there's also the ultimate gain of gaining Christ.

[11:12] Then in verse 7, there's this personal gain that was lost, but everything that is counted loss at the end of verse 7. And then in 8, the middle of verse 8, we see that everything is actually lost from him.

Not just counted loss, but he's suffering the loss in order that he might gain Christ. There is an exchange that's required.

The word for gain is the word for profit or advantage. It's only used three times in the scripture. It's used in the gospels to describe the difference between gaining the whole world and losing one's soul.

It also speaks of gaining a brother if he listens to your gentle rebuke. And in Philippians 1.21, Paul says, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

There was assumed value in the apostle Paul's life. There were things in his life that he considered to be an advantage. There were things in his life that on the surface, from a Jewish perspective, were considered advantageous for him as an individual.

[12:27] We find a short summary of those things as we back up even further into our passage in verses 5 and 6. He says, he was circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law of Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

These were the things that from a Judaistic perspective, Paul was it. He was the renaissance man of Judaism. He had it all together.

He was ultimate. He had arrived to the pinnacle of all that anyone could ascribe to as a Jew. He was not only of the right stock, but he was also of the right zeal.

Circumcised the eighth day of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the only tribes that was faithful to Judah. If you weren't a part of the tribe that David was a part of, at least you were part of the tribe of Benjamin, man, you were it.

And concerning zeal, persecuting the church, he had a zeal for his nation that drove him to persecution.

[13:42] A Hebrew of the Hebrews, he was one who probably had the first five books of the Bible memorized. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Have you even read those first five books?

And he had them memorized. He had it all together. He was at the top of his game. From a human perspective, he was it.

He was the next in line, really, to be, the one to be looked at like Gamaliel was, a person who would be at the pinnacle, a person who would be looked to for authority within his religion and among his people.

But there was an exchange that had to happen. What was considered an advantage needed a new perspective. It needed to be counted loss.

The word for counted is the word to lead or go before, to lead the way, to count, to think, to esteem, to have rule over, to be governed.

[14:52] The word for loss is the word for damage. It's the word for violence. Again, only found in four verses in the New Testament. It brings attention to the significance of these words in describing the exchange that Paul is talking about.

What seemed to be an advantage to Paul, he recognized was actually disruptive. Which was actually destructive. Was actually in the way from him having what was ultimate.

What he thought was ultimate was being at the pinnacle of Judaism. But what he recognized was the real ultimate and supreme value was knowing Christ.

Was knowing him. It required an exchange for him. Because to do otherwise was counterproductive and detrimental. I wonder this morning as we think about counting things lost.

This exchange that we have in this life of knowing him. The pursuit of knowing Christ. How does that play out in our life? Well, let's think about this for a second.

[16:03] You take your family on vacation. And if you're like my family, what we've learned to do is we pray before we take that trip. And what are some things we pray about?

Safety. What else? Don't let daddy get a ticket. Or don't let the car break down.

Or let this trip be really quick. I want to get to the destination. Those are the things that we pray about, right? What if we had this perspective?

The perspective of knowing Christ. Christ. And in that prayer before the Lord we say, God, whatever happens on this trip, may it lead me to know you better.

What might that open the door for? That might open the door for a ticket. Oh! Or stopping by the side of the road.

[17 : 02] The inconveniences of life that come to help press us in to knowing Him because that is ultimate. But it requires an exchange.

It requires a willingness to put away comfort for the sake of the ultimate knowing Christ. How about when there is physical issue in your life?

When you've been to doctor after doctor and you can't quite figure out what's going on inside. They have done the tests and one doctor after the other is throwing up their arms and wondering, I don't know what in the world is going on.

But finally you come to this doctor, they've run a battery of tests and he calls you on the phone and says, we need to make an appointment. I need to see you face to face. What does that prayer look like on the drive to the doctor?

That prayer would probably be, oh Lord, please make sure this isn't a big deal. And make sure it's treatable. And make sure that this isn't going to disrupt my family and disrupt my health and disrupt my future.

[18 : 14] But those who are willing to make this exchange, those who are willing to know Christ will say, Lord, whatever it takes to know you more, may I know you and use this experience whatever it is to press me in to deeper, more intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What about a work situation where you feel like someone has taken your idea, something that has led them to a promotion, but there you are having been the brain trust of this great idea and they took it from you and you go to the Lord in prayer and you have it out with Him.

because your future is important but there's an exchange that needs to happen, an exchange of laying down, an exchange of being undergirded by the confidence of the sovereignty of God and knowing that He controls every situation, a resting in Him, a trusting in the future that He has for you and a pressing in to deeper knowledge of Christ.

There is an exchange that's required, an exchange that's required in your life so that you can really know you're a Savior. but it also demands an experience.

Not only demands an exchange, it demands an experience. Now if you're anything like me, the heritage that I grew up in, we kind of shunned experience.

[19 : 59] It was all about knowing the things in the Word of God and having the knowledge, having the data, having the facts, knowing the information, information, but experience was something that was for the charismatics.

That was for the other people, the less spiritual individuals. But do you realize that God has called you to experience Him? God has called you to intimate knowledge of Him and that's what this word is all about.

It's not just about facts and data, it's about intimacy. It's the same word that's used to describe the knowledge between a husband and a wife. It's the same word that's used to describe the experiential knowledge that the Apostle John has with Christ who he touched and he heard and he observed and he marveled at his Savior because of the time he spent with his Messiah.

It was knowledge that didn't just include facts and figures but was the kind of knowledge that embedded in his life and led to faith.

That's the kind of knowledge that we're talking about. It's not the kind of knowledge where you say I'm a great cook because I memorized this cookbook. I know the recipes, I know the ingredients, I know the formula, I know how to get from point A to point B but you've never in your life actually baked a cake.

[21 : 26] The difference between that and a Bobby Flay who I don't know if you've ever watched any of those cooking shows, he's a master chef. He can turn popcorn into gourmet meal.

people because of his experience of knowing how to do these things. This is what we're talking about. This is the kind of knowledge God wants you to have of him.

Not just facts and figures, not just verses as a repertoire of understanding but the kind of understanding that leads you to action. The kind of understanding that leads you to experience, that leads you to confidence and peace and joy and hope in him.

experiences we see in verses 10 and 11 that include two things. First they include power, experiencing his power and we'll also talk about experiencing his suffering.

But first, let's talk about experiencing his power. He says that I might know him in the power of his resurrection. Let me tell you, I want to know the power of God.

[22 : 37] that's something that we just hunger for. But would you say this morning that your life is a life of power? Would you say that your life today is a life of potency and influence and fruitfulness?

Do you realize that God has called you to power, to experience his power? power? All throughout the epistles of Paul, there is this overarching theme that we see throughout them all of the power that is accessible to every Christian.

Just to give you a few, Ephesians 1, 15 and 18, Paul is praying for the church of Ephesus. He says, and I pray that you may know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards you.

The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, the power that is far beyond all principalities and powers and might and dominion in every name that is named.

Later on in the epistle, in chapter 3, verse 16, he says, I am praying that he would grant you to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man.

[23 : 46] And then in chapter 6, he says, be strong in the power of his might. In Colossians 1, he's praying for the church of Colossae.

He says, for this reason, I do not cease to pray for you, that you would be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. In Colossians 1, 28 and 29, he says, him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

To this end, I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. And then in 1 Thessalonians 1, 4 and 5, for we know, brothers, loved by God, that he chose you because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but with power.

power. Is your life marked by power today? Do you realize that the power of the almighty God who made heaven and earth, if you are a follower of Christ, if you have the spirit living within, is resident in your life for power?

Power to overcome sin. Power to live according to the spirit. Power to bless those who curse you. Power to pray for those who abuse you. Power to submit to various authorities.

[25 : 07] Power to fulfill the ministry that God has given to you. Power to be productive and abundant and fruitful. Power to rejoice in hardship. Power to give to those in need.

Power to risk much for the glory of God. Power to speak the gospel. Power to live with integrity. Power to endure hardship. Power to persevere.

Power to stand against the schemes of the devil. There is power for you. And our witness shines brightest in this world when we tap in to that power.

But that power only shows up in pain. That power only shows up in weakness. That power only shows up in suffering.

The resurrection power only comes through the path of the cross. Do you want to experience the power of God?

[26 : 11] You must walk the way of the cross. That's the way of pain. That's the way of suffering. Are you willing to experience power?

Do you want it? But you must be willing to embrace the pain of your Savior. Know the fellowship of his suffering.

That's what Paul says. I want to know the power of his resurrection, but I want to share in fellowship with his suffering. Excuse me. I want the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.

There is no resurrection without the cross. There is no power without pain. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 12, 9.

You're familiar with this. He says, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

[27 : 18] And Peter, in 1 Peter 4, 12, do not be surprised at the fiery trial that is coming upon you, as though something strange were happening to you, but rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ.

You are blessed. Why? Because the spirit of glory and power rests on you. You can have power if you're willing to embrace the pain of your Savior.

The power of God is most clearly seen in pain. That's when the exchange begins to happen. That's when suffering begins to take light.

That's when His strength is able to intervene in your life. Our Savior walked the road of the cross, and He demands that each of those who are true disciples of Him will take up His cross daily and follow Him.

We're not those who hunt for suffering. We're not those who are eager and delight necessarily in having all this adversity come into our lives, but we're willing to walk that risky path that leads to suffering for the sake of Christ.

[28:39] All who desire to be godly in Christ will suffer persecution. persecution. It's not invited persecution, but it's a persecution that comes for those who are willing to take a stand.

Well, we've talked about the pursuit of knowledge. I trust that you are pursuing Him with all of your heart. But now let's talk about the product of this knowledge.

We talked about the pursuit of this knowledge, but who really cares? I mean, who really wants this? What is the product for me? What does it mean in my life? Why is this a good thing? Why should I pursue the knowledge of Christ?

Well, first because it leads to holiness. It leads to holiness. We find here in verse 10, becoming like Him in His death.

What did Christ's death prove? Death was God's ultimate proof of obedience. Find in Hebrews chapter 5, 8, and 9, it says this, Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.

[29:48] Now, let me back up. We're talking about Jesus here, okay? Although He was a son, He learned obedience through suffering. This is our Savior we're talking about.

And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Christ, in humbling Himself, demonstrated holiness and obedience and humility to the Father, to the objectives and the will of the Father by subjecting Himself to the cross.

We learn obedience. We become holy as we're willing to follow the example of Christ. So those who follow His steps must die to the flesh.

Colossians 3 says this, put to death what is earthly in you. Sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming. And in Romans 6, He says, Do you not know that all who have been baptized into Christ, Jesus, were baptized into His death?

[30:59] We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order the body of sin might be destroyed so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.

Consider yourselves dead to sin but alive to Christ. Holiness is what robes the true believer. Those who are being conformed to the image of Christ by embracing the cross, by being conformed to His death are those who are walking in holiness.

The Christian life is putting to death what is natural so we can enjoy what is eternal. There's death to reputation. There's death to comfort.

Death to justice. This side of the grave. Death to intimidation. Death to manipulation. Death to entitlement. To gratification.

To self-preservation. To addiction. And bitterness. And filthy language. And everything on this earth that tethers us to this world and keeps our focus off of what is eternal.

[32:09] There is death to those things. Several weeks ago I was looking on the internet and I saw that there was this man who had some authorities show up at his door.

The neighbors had heard some turbulence that was taking place in the apartment. They heard furniture that was being thrown around the room. They heard pounding on the walls.

But what clinched it for them was hearing a man's voice say, I'm going to kill you! And then the shrill screams of this woman who seemed to be terrified at what was taking place.

The authorities show up at the door and they're asking this man, where is your wife? He says, I don't have a wife. He says, okay, where is your girlfriend? I don't have a girlfriend.

Well, there was a disturbance that was taking place in your home and we heard death threats being made. We heard shrill screams that were taking place. He says, oh, that was me.

[33:14] There's this poisonous spider in my room and I'm terrified of spiders. So he's throwing the furniture and he's beating on the walls and he's going to kill that spider.

Are you killing sin? Are you that aggressive? That focused? That intentional about destroying sin, the poison of sin in your life so that you can know him so that the pursuit of knowledge of Christ will lead to the product of holiness in your life so that you can show Christ to those around you.

But it also leads to hope. We find here, it says in verse 11, that by any means possible, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

This world was not the end for Paul. Paul set his sights on eternity, a higher objective, the true reality.

And he strained with every ounce of energy to achieve in this life what will only be fully realized in the next. Christ. He wanted to know the joy of the presence and the power of God as much as he could in this life because that's what he was anticipating in the next one.

[34:48] He wanted to fill his life up to the full, to the max, with the knowledge of Christ because he knew that was ultimate. And because that was ultimate, he wanted to experience as much as he could today without having to wait for heaven.

So for Paul, all that mattered was knowing him and pursuing the reality, the future reality of the resurrection where the culmination of that knowledge would be realized.

But to the degree that he could realize it now, he was pressing on. That hope moved him to the goal of knowing Christ, the surpassing excellence of the knowledge of Christ.

there was no joy that this life had to offer that could compare with the joy of that day. This life had no pleasure to compare with the satisfaction of that day.

This life had no experience whether graduation or the prom or marriage or children or grandchildren or prominence at work or success or money.

[36:01] Fill in the blank. This life had nothing to offer in comparison with the wonder of the knowledge of Christ. And as Psalm 73, Jonathan read this already, we just bring it back to the close of this message so we can be reminded of it.

as the psalmist says, may it be our heart is well. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Oh Maranatha, do you know him?

Do you know the Savior? And to know the God of comfort, you must be willing to experience pain so the God of comfort can come in and minister his comfort to you.

To know the God of provision, there must be a lack in your life. To know the God of healing, there must be illness. forgiveness. To know the God who satisfies, there must be a need.

[37:23] To know the God who sustains, there must be desperation. To know the God of hope, there has to be despair. To know the God of wisdom, you must feel like a fool.

And to know the God who saves, there must be a need for forgiveness. Do you know your Savior? Do you know your Christ?

This morning, I'm sure there are those who are here who know Him and are pursuing that goal, but you can know Him more. You can press in and desire to know Him more.

And for me, I can remember a time back in California sitting on my couch in the front room at 6 o'clock in the morning, agonizing in my heart to say, I want to know you whatever the cost, so I give you my family.

I give you my health. I give you my future. I give you my finances. I give you my comfort.

[38:28] I give you my everything. It belongs to you anyway, because I want to know you. Are you holding back? Or is there willingness for the exchange?

exchange? And the exchange, although difficult, leads to struggles, leads to suffering. It is truly wonderful, because you have a wonderful Savior.

And for those of you this morning, you're hearing about Jesus, and you've never come into relationship with him, he not only wants you to know him, but he wants to know you.

It begins with forgiveness, it begins with repentance on your part, and a coming to him by faith, and laying it down, the burdens of life, putting on his shoulders, the exchange that begins with setting aside the muck and the mire of life, so that you can have the pure robe of righteousness of Jesus.

That's an exchange, and that's our Savior. Do you know him today? Let's pray. Oh Lord, we want to know you more. Whatever it takes, whatever the cost, we know that to experience the power of

God, it comes through the path of pain, and we are those who resist pain, we reject pain, but Lord, may we be willing to embrace it, embrace the cross, walk the steps of our Savior so that we can experience the power of resurrection life.

[40:07] so may each of us in this room not only be on the path stationary, but be on the path in hot pursuit of the wonder of our great King.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. .