

To Know Him

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[0 : 00] Reading in Ephesians chapter 1, we can read again at verse 16. We read these words, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, and so on. The psalms that we've sung together already this evening, there were words that came up in them that give a sense of how we are to approach God.

Psalms spoke of coming to him, even in the midst of a world that was full of idols, coming to him with a sense of praise. Praise the Lord was words that kept ringing in that psalm. Psalm 62, as mentioned, there was the word expectation, the idea of coming to God in worship and praise with that sense of expectation. And in the psalm we've just sung there, Psalm 122, well-known words, we have these words of approaching God in worship with a sense of joy. I joyed when to the house of God go up, they said to me, there's joy and there's a prayer for peace. And as we approach this weekend, where we come to remember the Lord's death, as we share in the communion weekend, we ask ourselves, how are we approaching it?

How is it that we are coming to this time? Do we have that sense of praise that Psalm 135 spoke of?

Do we come with a sense of expectation, as we sang off in Psalm 62? Do we come with a sense of joy, as Psalm 122 spoke of? Well, as we come to this weekend, we should come prayerfully. And as we've heard the men pray already, with that sense of wonder and amazement at what God has done for us, and at what we come to remember as a people. How God, in all his enormity and his majesty, came down to us, sinners as we are, and gave his own son, that we might find life through him.

Well, as Paul writes to the church at Ephesus, he's writing to a church there that was a people gathered in God's name, who were seeking to realize who God was more and more.

[2 : 50] And he's filled with this desire for them. You see that, you know, in this first chapter, how in verse 15, he speaks of having heard about their faith and your love towards all the saints.

I do not cease to give thanks for you. He's heard about their faith, their love, and he does not cease to give thanks for them in his prayers. But what is his prayer for them? Well, as Paul writes to the church at Ephesus here, as you see in verse 3 to verse 14, there's one long sentence there in the original. It just goes on, and it's like Paul is pouring out his heart to the church at Ephesus about the wonder and the glory and majesty of God. There's a great sense of praise, as Paul describes all that God has done for his people through Jesus Christ, how he has blessed them, how he has blessed us in so many ways. You read there in verse 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he blessed us in the beloved, his own son. The mystery that was made known of his will, the plan that came to fruition in the fullness of time, everything that God was working together, and the wonder of it, the amazement of it, Paul is pouring out that to them, that they would be filled with a sense of wonder and awe and praise towards God. And as we come this weekend, that is what we come with as well, to know more of him. That's what Paul goes on to pray for them then in verse 15 down to verse 23, and especially as you read there in verse 17, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, that we would know him. After telling the Ephesians of the wonder, the amazement of God, of all that he has done for them, for those reason, he says in verse 15, a phrase that shows Paul wants to help them understand even more of the things that he has already given to them, that he wants them to understand in the light of all the blessings that flow from God. He wants them to know more and more of this.

He wants them to know in order that they can show. And as we approach this weekend too, that should be our longing and our desire, to know more of him.

Not to focus on ourselves, not to focus even on the world around us, but for that time, for a special time, to be focused on him and to know more of him and the hope to which he has called us, the great riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. And so there's two things I want us to think about from this passage this evening, two things as we approach this weekend. The first is this, to have a greater knowledge of him. And then secondly, a greater knowledge of the hope that he offers.

So firstly, a greater knowledge of him. Anything we want to do for the Lord, we do it prayerfully. [6 : 55] Because we know in prayer, we are acknowledging our dependence on him. And so we often ask ourselves, what should we pray? And how should we pray? Our prayers will have different elements to them. Our prayers will have various aspects to them. That's the way the Bible teaches us to pray. We learn simply from a very young age how we are to pray. The word joy is broken down into three words. You pray first to Jesus, then for others, then yourself. There's all kinds of ways that we pray. But the first priority in prayer. And the first thing that we look to in prayer before we seek to do anything for the Lord, before we seek to go on in any of the work we're involved in, whether it's our evangelism, an outreach, whatever we are doing for the Lord, even before we invite anyone along to church, it should always be to seek to know him ourselves.

To know him better. Because how can we explain to others the wonder, the beauty of God, if we don't know it for ourselves?

God bless you. It reminds me of the announcement on the aeroplane when you're sitting before takeoff and the safety announcement comes on. And it speaks about when the air supply fails and the masks drop down, before you help anyone else, put on your own face mask first.

Because if you don't have your face mask on, you're not going to be able to help others. The oxygen is going to be starved from you. And so we think of that ourselves and our knowledge of God.

If we're not feeding ourselves, if we're not hungering and thirsting for God more and more, how are we going to be able to help others? If our faith is weak, if we ourselves are weak, how are we going to help others?

[9 : 05] And so Paul's prayer here for the church at Ephesus is that as they go on in their faith, that the priority is that they know more of him. And as we approach this weekend and as we approach the Lord's Supper, how are you coming?

Are you coming spiritually tired or spiritually vibrant? Have you been giving of yourself to the extent you feel like you're running on empty?

Or are you feeling full? All of us will come with a fuel gauge at different levels. But we'll all come, or we should all come, seeking to know him.

And to be filled up with this knowledge of him. To be filled up with a sense of praise towards him. To be filled up with this expectation of him and this joy towards him.

To know him more. The shorter catechism, when it speaks about the Lord's Supper, it says this.

Towards the end of the question, it says that as we come, we come by faith.

[10 : 21] And as we do, we are made partakers of his body and blood. With all his benefits. To the spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

That is purpose in coming to the Lord's Supper. To do this in remembrance of him. And for our good, for spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

So the more we know him and see him and marvel at him, the more then we go on in his strength.

That's what Paul prays here in verse 17.

It's the starting point for this weekend. To have this desire to know him. And it's something that Jesus himself prayed for us too.

Jesus' prayer for his people in John 17 is a prayer that prays in this way too. That we would know him. And this is eternal life, it says in verse 3 of that chapter.

[11 : 25] That they know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That we know him more.

What is the greatest threat facing the church today? When we look around ourselves, we might see many things that we see as a threat towards the church.

We speak of different things. And we might have different answers. It may be other religions. It may be secularism. It may be materialism. It may be political powers that have no fear of God.

There are so many answers that we could give. What is the greatest threat facing the church today? Someone once gave this answer though. The biggest threat is an inadequate, anemic, impoverished knowledge of God in the church of Jesus Christ.

The greatest threat facing the church is not always out there. It's in here. It's in our own hearts. An inadequate, anemic, impoverished knowledge of God in the church of Jesus Christ.

[12:40] And when you think of what you read in this passage, the spiritual blessings in Christ that Paul has shown to the church at Ephesus. And the people there and to ourselves of all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

How can we not long to know him better? Martin Lloyd-Jones, in preaching on this passage, he said, Our supreme need is to know God.

And as you read the letter to the Ephesians, we see it's a subject dominating it. This knowledge of God, what people were thinking about, what they were speaking about, and it continues through all generations.

People either seeking to know God or turning away from God. It's Satan's great ploy that we will think that he cannot be known.

That he's not real. But God reveals to us through himself and through his word that he can be known. And if you have come to know him through faith in Jesus Christ, if you've come to know God, do you not long to know more and more of him?

[14:09] When you think of Paul himself, as he wrote later to the church at Philippi, In that letter he writes about his own knowledge of God after many years as a follower of Christ.

And he says that in all that he's experienced, in all that he's done, he has not yet attained the knowledge of Christ that he should have. He doesn't know it yet.

But he says, but he's pressing on towards that goal. In Philippians 3, verse 8 to 14, you read that section. Paul doesn't know him as he should, but he's pressing on.

And so that's the way we should be as well. Even though we may go on many years, we still not know him in his fullness.

There's so much to be known, so much of the riches of his grace that we still cannot fully understand or comprehend. But we still long to know him more.

[15:15] That's what Paul's prayer shows us here. But are we praying to him with a sense of praise and delight in who he is?

Are we praying with a sense of expectation as to what God can do in our midst? For us and for many more throughout our communities, throughout this world that belongs to him.

Do we have a sense of expectation? Do we have a sense of joy as we approach this weekend? Coming in to the Lord's house. Coming to be with his people.

Coming to remember his death. Prayerfully praying that the peace of God will surround us. That we will know the blessing of his presence with us.

That we will know him more. That that would be our desire first and foremost. To know him more.

[16:15] The second thing we see here too is a greater knowledge of hope. A greater knowledge of the hope that we have in Christ.

In verse 18. Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. That you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. The more we know him.

The more we realize and see the hope that there is in him. And the more that we see the hope that is in him.

The more we long for others to see the hope that there is with him too. That's the prayer that Paul has here for the church at Ephesus. Not that they should keep this to themselves.

But that they would know this hope. The inheritance that they have. The immeasurable greatness of his power towards us. Who believe all of these things. He is praying not to keep to themselves.

[17:18] But to share with others. So as we come to the Lord's Supper this weekend. As we come to this communion weekend.

With this hope to know him more. But this hope that we have to share as well. That we should be nourished. And refreshed through God's word.

To go and share it with others. That our tanks that are maybe starting to run on empty. Be filled. So we go on in his strength. And his power.

How well do you know people? There will be some people you know very well. And have known for a very long time. But there's other people you just meet.

You haven't known them a very long time. And you don't know them. You don't know their past. You don't know their future. But when you look at what Paul is praying for the people here.

[18:19] And to know him. To know the Lord. It's to know him in his fullness. To fully understand Jesus. Past. Present.

And future. Because it's in this knowledge. You'll be able to share him more clearly. The more you know what he has done. As we look back.

And see. How God gave his son into this world. The more we see. How Christ died on the cross. For sinners. The more we see that. Even from the very foundations of time.

That he was the one who had planned all things out. That there's this past. And you see there's this present. That we come in his presence tonight.

That we come to meet with him. And that he speaks too of a future. There's this inheritance. Glorious inheritance. That speaks of. That we have to look forward to.

[19:16] So he prays too. That we would have more knowledge of this. Having your eyes and hearts enlightened. That you may know what is the hope. And another part of Ephesians.

Just later on. In chapter 4 verse 18. It speaks there about that. There are those who are darkened in their understanding. Alienated from the life of God.

Because of the ignorance that is in them. Due to their hardness of heart. They don't know him. And so Paul's prayer for them is.

Having your eyes and your hearts enlightened. Opened to the knowledge of who he is. And the hope that he offers. There is great hope in him.

And we see this hope. The hope of his calling. Which is what God has done for us. The wonder of salvation.

[20:18] The wonder that Christ died for me on that cross. And the hope that he has purchased for his people. The love of God as Romans speaks of.

But God shows his love for us. And that while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. And yet the invitation goes out.

It goes out to all to come. And see the wonder of this saviour. To come and taste of the glorious riches of Christ yourself.

To come and know him. So that is Paul's great desire for the church at Ephesus here.

But it always gives us a warning. Even as he spoke of those in chapter 4 verse 18. Who were darkened in their understanding.

[21:21] Later on in the book of Revelation. There is a warning given to the church at Ephesus. And it speaks there of the fact.

That in all the good deeds that they are doing. In all that he sees of their active service for the Lord. He says this. You have left your first love.

They have forgotten what it is about. And there is always that danger for ourselves. That we lose sight of the Lord.

And all that we are doing for him. And that is the prayer that Paul has here. To guard against these very things. So that even we ourselves today.

We would not abandon our first love. As they did. But that instead we would go on seeking him. To know him.

[22:22] And to continue having the eyes of our hearts enlightened. To know the hope to which he has called. To keep our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus.

That is what we are called to do. Day by day. Week by week. Month by month. That we will go on longing to know more of him.

And longing to have this hope. That is found in him. In order to share that hope with others. Do you know him?

And do you long to know him more? Do you have that sense of praise? As we come to this communion weekend.

Do you have that sense of expectation? As you come to this communion weekend. Do you have that sense of joy? As you come to this communion weekend.

[23:24] There are so many things. That will discourage us. But our greatest encouragement. Is found in the love of God towards us.

That he gave his son. Who gives us hope. And we look to him. During the Second World War.

There was an American troop ship. That was carrying 7,000 Marines across the Pacific. There was one evening on board.

When seven Christians were out on deck. Towards the aft end. The back end. Of the ship. They'd gathered together for a time of praise.

And prayer. Just seven of them. And they were there together. And the many other Marines on board. Were coming and passing by. Seeing what they were up to.

[24 : 20] But as soon as they heard that they were praising God. And praying to him. They turned away. Many of them just with a sense. Of mocking. But there was one young man.

Who heard them. And he hung around. And towards. The end. When many of the people had moved away. He came up to them. And started to speak to them.

And initially just asked them. Do you have a light for a cigarette? They said. No. We don't. They couldn't help with this. But that was really just a way in for him.

What he wanted to know was more. Of what they were talking about. And they realized that. And they started speaking to him. About their Savior. And the love of Christ.

That he had shown to them. And the Lord. Melted that young man's heart. And there. In that time together.

[25 : 19] He broke down. In tears of repentance. And they prayed. With him. In the midst of all that was going on. In the world then.

In the midst of all that was going on. On this ship. With thousands of other troops. Who were mocking and laughing. There was this one. Who came to faith.

In Christ. The meeting ended. With not seven singing praise. But eight. And they sang a hymn.

As they closed. Thank you Lord. For saving my soul. Thank you Lord. For making me whole. Thank you Lord. For giving to me.

Thy great salvation. So rich. And free. One soul. Came to praise God. That night. In the midst.

[26 : 15] Of seven thousand. And you think of the size. Of our town. It's a similar number. The population. Here. About seven thousand. But wouldn't it be wonderful.

If even this weekend. One soul came. There would be reason. For rejoicing. To sing to God. With praise. To look to him.

With expectation. To come. To him. With joy. Saying. Thank you Lord. For giving to me. Thy great salvation. So rich.

And free. Let us come. Seeking to know. More of him. With a great expectation. That God. Can day. Do great things. And that he would give us. A sense of joy. In the midst. Of all that goes on. Word. Sacrament.

[27 : 12] Fellowship. Prayer. All that we do. May he be in our midst. And may he bless. We'll close.

By singing. To God's praise. A psalm. A prayer. That seeks the blessing of God. Psalm 67. The first version. Of the.

Psalm 67.