

If You Know Me
John 14:1-14
May 14, 2017

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

In today’s Gospel reading, Philip says to Jesus: *Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us* (Jn 14:8 NIV). In response to that request, Jesus asks a very probing question: *Jesus answered: Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?* (Jn 14:9 NIV).

That is a question of the most serious nature. It would be interesting to have heard Philip’s answer. Do you think he might have stammered and stuttered around, or do you think he would have popped right up and said, “Of course, I know you.”

How would you respond? What would you say if Jesus were here today and asked you, “Do you know me?” There could be more people in this world who know who Jesus is, than there are people who know Jesus. Today, I invite you to ask yourself, “Do I know Jesus?” We are going to look for an answer to that question by answering three questions: Do I know Jesus?; How do I know Jesus?; What do I have because I know Jesus?

Do I know Jesus?

When you are worried, when you are scared about what tomorrow might hold, when you lay awake at night because fear and anxiety rob you of the peace it takes to sleep, then your natural self is saying you don’t know Jesus. That was the problem the disciples were having. Jesus’ announcement that he was going to be crucified overruled their knowledge of Jesus’ true nature.

Are you asking yourself how the disciples could let their human nature trump their knowledge of the Savior? Do you think that couldn't happen to you? Let's ask the apostle Paul how that might happen. *I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing* (Ro 7:14-15, 18-19 NIV).

Like Paul, the things we do say we do not know Jesus. We lie, we covet, we say hurtful things, we gossip, we fail to thank God for everything we have, we treat others as though we are better than they are. We do all the things that God's Law condemns. We do all the things Jesus told us not to do. We are like the Israelites of Isaiah's time that God described like this: *These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me* (Is 29:13 NIV).

There is no condition more deadly than not knowing Jesus. Conversely, there is nothing more important than knowing Jesus. Jesus made this very clear: *I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned* (Jn 15:5-6 NIV).

At this point, you might object, "But I know Jesus!" So, we must take up the question ...

How do I know Jesus?

There are two ways to answer this question. First, in your human nature you have no desire to know Jesus, so how is it that you do know Jesus? Faith is not something you generate on your own. Faith in Jesus is beyond all human capabilities. Faith is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8 tells us: *It is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God* (Eph 2:8 NIV). That explains how you came to the knowledge of Jesus.

The other answer to the question concerns whom you know Jesus to be. I said earlier that there could be more people in the world who know about Jesus than there are people who know Jesus. Let's look at the difference.

It might surprise you to know that Muslims believe that Jesus lived on this earth. They believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. They believe that Jesus was a great prophet. They believe that Jesus was bodily taken to heaven. Muslims know quite a bit about Jesus.

However, Muslims don't believe that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. They don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead. They don't believe that Jesus is the one and only true Son of God. They don't believe that Jesus is their Savior.

For all the Muslims know about Jesus, they don't know Jesus. Their knowledge is no different than many other religions that know and accept Jesus as a good man.

However, knowing about Jesus is not going to save you. Jesus spoke about people who know about him but don't truly know him: *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'* (MT 7:22-23 NIV).

You see, the question "How do I know Jesus?" is very important. Do you know Jesus as the true Son of God? Do you know Jesus as God's remedy for the problem of sin? Do you know Jesus as your personal Savior? If you answered these questions yes, then you truly know Jesus as he must be known.

Knowing Jesus is a wonderful blessing. A blessing, that by its very nature, brings some sort of benefit. So, now we ask the question:

What do I have because I know Jesus?

Because you know Jesus, you have forgiveness of sins. Luke writes in the 10th chapter of the book of Acts: *All the prophets testify about [Jesus] that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name* (Ac 10:43 NIV).

Sometimes people fail to fully appreciate the importance of forgiveness. Why did Jesus pay such a high price for our forgiveness? Because there is no room in heaven for sinful people. Only people who are completely sin-free will spend eternity with the Lord.

How many sins does it take to keep you out of heaven? One. That being the case, when was the last time you spent a whole day without sinning? When was the last time you spent an entire hour without sinning? Knowing Jesus brings forgiveness and forgiveness brings eternal life.

Knowing Jesus also brings earthly blessings. This world is a cold and cruel place. Sin infects and affects everything around us. People treat each other in ways too terrible to describe. Natural disasters come without warning. Loved ones die. Diseases take their toll. Children go astray. There is no end to the grief we must live with.

The unbelieving world suffers through all of these things without hope. Unbelievers have no one to turn to, nowhere to run. That's why we have drug and alcohol abuse problems. That's why we have a runaway divorce rate. That's why we have a world full of problems that the world can't solve.

However, we who know Jesus have a refuge. We have someone who knows what we are going through, and he makes himself available to help us through our times of sorrow and tragedy. We have a Savior-God who loves us and cares for us. We have this promise from God: *Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand* (Is 41:10 NIV).

Another blessing that is ours because we know Jesus is the capacity and the will to work for him and with him. Jesus promises: *I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me*

will do what I have been doing (Jn 14:12 NIV).

There is no greater joy than following in the footsteps of Jesus by serving our heavenly Father. We have the privilege of sharing the best news the world has ever known – the story of salvation through faith in Jesus. We are blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit which allows us to perform good deeds that are pleasing to God. We are capable of loving other people in a way the unbelieving world knows nothing about.

The last blessing we have because we know Jesus is the knowledge that this world is not the end. How reassuring it is to know that there is more than the wreck and ruin we see all around us. How comforting it is to know that “I’m just a stranger here, heaven is my home.”

Let’s return to some earlier questions. Do you know Jesus as the true Son of God? Do you know Jesus as God’s remedy for the problem of sin? Do you know Jesus as your personal Savior? If your answer is yes, then you know Jesus.