

Knowing Christ

Philippians 3:4b-14

Oct 4, 2020

"Picture yourself driving to the funeral parlor or chapel, parking the car and getting out. As you walk inside the building you notice the flowers, the soft organ music. You see the faces of friends and family you pass along the way. As you walk down to the front of the room and look inside the casket you suddenly come face to face with yourself. This is your funeral service. All these people have come to honor you, to express feelings of love and appreciation for your life. As you take a seat and wait for the service to begin, you look at the program in your hand. There are to be four speakers. The first is from your family. The second speaker is one of your friends. The third speaker is from your work or profession and the fourth is from your church or some community organization where you have been involved in service.

Now think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life? In short, how do you want to be remembered by people?

From today's lesson from Philippians chapter 3, we can hear Paul's response to this question. Verses 7 and 8, "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ "

In short, he said, "I, Paul would like to be remembered as a person who knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Period. Compared to knowing Jesus Christ, Paul said everything else in life could be called, "rubbish." In the Greek language it literally means, "bodily excrement". Eugene Peterson translates it in the Message as "dog dung"

Paul was not an ordinary man. He had so much to brag about. He was "circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless."

He could be praised for his noble family root, excellent academic achievement, deepest passion to live blamelessly, etc. at his funeral. Paul, however, says, in effect, "please do not mention about them at my funeral. Knowing Jesus Christ in my life is everything. My life is nothing without knowing Christ Jesus."

That is kind of strange when we think that when Paul wrote this, he had met Jesus Christ almost thirty years earlier. From the very moment that Paul met Jesus Christ, he wanted to know Jesus Christ. He must have known all the difference in the world between meeting somebody and knowing somebody.

About 25 years ago when I served at Jesse Lee in Ridgefield, CT, I got an invitation from the White House and had a chance to meet and spend a time with the vice president of the United States then, Al Gore. The truth is I do not know him personally and he does not know me personally, either.

Paul says in verse 10 his number one desire is - "That I want to know Christ" (Philippians 3:10, NRSB) See that Paul did not say, "I want to know about Christ" He said, "I want to know Christ"

What did he mean when he said, "I want to know Christ?"

The verb, "know" in the Bible is often used to tell an intimate relationship. For example, Genesis 4:1 reads, "Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain." It means, "Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain." (NIV)

Knowing Christ means having an intimate and personal and close relationship with Christ. I like the way Eugene Peterson translates in the Message: "I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him."

Embracing Christ and being embraced by Christ.

Adopting this beautiful pictorial expression, our Christian life can be defined as life embracing Christ and being embraced by Christ.

Who is Christ? Paul said in the first letter to Christians in Corinth that we have been reading this month, "to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1:24) Yes, he reminds us that to

us, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Therefore, knowing Christ is embracing God's power and God's wisdom. Knowing Christ is being embraced by God's power and God's wisdom. What a wonderful and powerful life it is. Who does not want this kind of life?

That is why we take time to know Christ. We take time to read the Bible, the Word of God. I am glad we do read one chapter of the Bible every morning. Let God speak to you every day. Let the God's power and the God's wisdom fill you every day.

We take time to be in silence to listen to God. We take time to look up the sky and the cloud. We take time to watch the birds and the flowers and the ocean and the rivers. We take time to listen to God who speaks in the middle of His creation.

We take time to converse with God. Yes, we spend time in prayer every day. I still remember the five figure prayer Franklyn introduced the other Sunday to children. I have been practicing it. I highly recommend you to take time to pray the five figure prayer.

1. our thumb is nearest you. So begin your prayers by praying for those closest to you. They are the easiest to remember.
2. The next finger is the pointing finger. Pray for those who teach, instruct and heal. This includes teachers, doctors and ministers. They need support and wisdom in pointing others in the right direction.
3. The next finger is the tallest finger. It reminds us of our leaders. Pray for the leaders of the government, leaders in business and industry, and administrators. They need God's guidance.
4. The fourth finger is our ring finger. Surprisingly this is our weakest finger. It should remind us to pray for those who are weak, in trouble or in pain. They need our prayers day and night. We cannot pray too much for them.
5. And lastly comes our little finger. Our pinkie should remind us to pray for ourselves. By the time we have prayed for the other four groups, our own needs

will be put into proper perspective and we will be able to pray for our needs more effectively.

A surgeon was called out one morning for an emergency surgery and when he returned home his little boy asked his dad about the surgery. He said, "Dad, did you have to cut the man open to see what was inside of him?" He said, "Yes, Son I did." He said, "Dad, did you see his lungs and his stomach and could you see his heart?" As his son was talking to his dad, his little four year old sister was sitting next to him and when he asked that question, before dad could answer him, she spoke up and said, "Dad, did you see Jesus in his heart?"

Celtic Christians answer this way. Let me share a portion of the prayer of Celtic Christians, known as "The Deer's Cry" which goes:

"Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ under me, Christ over me, Christ to right of me, Christ to left of me. Christ in lying down, Christ in sitting, Christ in rising up. Christ in the heart of every person, who may think of me. Christ in the mouth of every one, who may speak to me. Christ in every eye, which may look on me! Christ in every ear, which may hear me."

Christ at every place, at every time and in everything.

Where do you see Christ in your life? When do you see God's power and God's wisdom embracing you? When do you see yourself being embraced by God's power and God's wisdom?

May you live your Christian life day by day, embracing Christ and being embraced by Christ. In the name of the triune God, so be it. Amen.