

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 7th May 2023 10 am

Knowing Him

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 109 Crown him with many crowns

Scripture Jeremiah 31:31-34 (page 793)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk A King's crown

Chorus MP 858 I want to know you

Notices Strict time, 9:45 prayer time, please come, see below
Coronation lunch, Spring convention, Warwick - BCM Update
'Move it or lose it' not coming

Prayer and share time

Communion preparation

Communion

Reading Philippians 3:1-11 (Page 1180)

Hymn MP 859 I want to serve the purposes of God in my generation

Sermon *Knowing Him*

Hymn MP 799 All I once held dear (knowing you)

Closing Prayer

Earlier Church Covenant 1967

3. It is needful to cultivate the Christian life, and so I promise to present myself at the services of worship, realising the importance of the prayer meeting, and putting away all idle excuses and self-justification.

1a

Prayer and Exordium

Trickery is everywhere, but it's not to be in the church. **Dogs** is how Paul describes those that promote it amongst God's people. 'Bishop' Paul is not pulling his punches, dogs were considered unclean and to be detested.

Some in the church at Philippi were circulating false teaching. They were false worshippers, and worse still they were trying to persuade others to be so to.

Paul sees what is going on – and reserves strong language for them.

2 Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh.

Who is he speaking of? It is the judaisers the 'circumcision group' Paul knows the damage done and is angry about it, you can still feel the heat coming off the paper, these are **men who do evil**. Circumcision was a command for all Jews. But here false Christians from a Jewish background were saying that to be truly saved you needed to obey the teachings of Moses. There are groups today that say the same.

They wanted to mix the observances of Moses with the doctrine of Christ and his Gospel. Circumcision was a sign in the flesh commanded for all Jews throughout the OT from Abraham onwards. And anyone who wanted to become a Jew had to be circumcised. So it became the mark of true Judaism.

✚ **But Paul doesn't now call it circumcision - he calls it mutilation.**

Here is a chapter more at home in the letter to the church in Galatia, there the problem was much worse, to them he goes further saying "**As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!**" Gal 5:12

■ You have parental guidance on a film, not usually on a sermon, .. U

✚ **So why is this here? How does it fit in with the main theme of this letter?**

The church at Philippi was a gospel church and when Paul was imprisoned it had thrown them. they were bereft, distraught. This wrong reaction was because they did not look at things the right way, they had wrong thinking, they did **not have in mind the things of God but the things of man**. Paul had to correct that. In doing so Paul addresses a major problem that was destroying the church in Galatia and seemed to be poised to do the same here. They were being threatened by subtle false teaching – as false teaching usually is.

✚ **A symbol was taking the place the real thing. the signpost for the destination**

■ Like thinking there is a programme on your desktop PC and finding it is only a short cut. Or a scam email with a promising but false link.

1b

✚ Paul has to make it clear that the sign is not the reality.

Jesus is the One all the OT signs pointed to. Once he had come, the signs instead of helping, now hinder, – the reality is found in a person, x2

✚ The physical in the OT were pointers to the spiritual.

A true Christian is a man or woman, boy or girl who knows God. x2 That is the Work of the Spirit. The Lord's Spirit in us has brought the merits of Christ and his finished work on the cross to me. That blood shed enables me to stand forgiven and clean in the sight of God. It is His Spirit that assures me I am now adopted as a child of God. I now live in step with the Spirit and produce the fruit of the Spirit in my life. We worship not with animal sacrifices, incense, priestly garments, tabernacle and temples but we worship in Spirit and Truth, these are the true worshippers the Lord desires. So Paul says here...

3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

The 'flesh' sark is mentioned three times in three verses (2,3,4). So here is the enemy of the Spirit for the Spirit and the flesh are in opposition.

the flesh is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the flesh cannot please God. Rom 8:7-8

This is how we can see who belong to Christ - does that person live by – is controlled by - the Spirit of Jesus or are they controlled and lead by their fleshly ways of thinking?

In fact **the mind of sinful man** sees things opposite to the way of God. Think that way and Paul being in prison must be a disaster, that is that what comes naturally. So today people think of all pain as bad, all pleasure good, obstacles in your life bad, a life of ease is good. That is not God's way. **For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do – or think - what you want.** Gal 5:17

✚ How about you? How do you think and act?

Anything of the flesh opposes the spiritual life. It is very subtle. Circumcision was the issue then, not now. For many years the RCs were trying to convince people that spirituality came through the transformed bread and wine. Not so. That is now largely forgotten.

So what is it today? Well anything that we do or look to that we seek merit from.

■ Go on holiday and see the number of people who swarm into the old churches and go in to light a candle, or cross themselves.

Oh we don't do that. Nor christen children. We are not the Church of England. So what are you and I prone to do in the hope that God will then be more likely to be pleased with me, and therefore accept me?

Is it my effort? He seems my effort? I have made an effort to be here this morning. I have put some money in the box, helped out in some way?

Maybe you see yourself as 'not like others', you avoid the obvious vices of those around, you keep the law, you are an upright person, these things contribute towards you seeing yourself as a good person. God must see that and therefore I have every prospect of Heaven?

Paul's answer is through his testimony, "this is how I used to think" he says: v4 **I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:**

circumcised on the eighth day, exactly what the law required when the law required it.

of the people of Israel, His birth-right privileges. He was not a convert but a native Israelite: of the right stock, my parents were Christians we might say.

of the tribe of Benjamin, in which tribe the temple stood. Benjamin was the father's darling, and this was a favourite tribe.

a Hebrew of Hebrews; An Israelite by father and mother, no gentile blood here!

in regard to the law, a Pharisee; and the son of a Pharisee Ac 23:6. A scholar brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, an eminent teacher of the law he was well versed Ac 22:3 and part of the most strict sect of his religion. Ac 26:5. Ph. Ph...

He was not just bookish, he was active, very, **as for zeal, persecuting the church as for legalistic righteousness, faultless**. as to the letter of the law and outward observance of it spot on, everyone was super impressed!

Yes he was earnest and as a result confident, very confident that he had it all.

But did he? But did he? It was a zeal without knowledge Ac 22:3,4

- But then suddenly there had been a shock change in his thinking.

■ Like the man who is born and brought up in a town, he grows up there and thinks he is doing well and knows pretty much all there is to know about the place – when suddenly he finds a door – and realizes that all his life he is living on a film set – there is another world out there.

So Paul makes a great discovery – he meets someone from another world who opens the door to him to this other world. He meets Jesus. Jesus meets Him.

This world is not all there is, there is a door to another, and Jesus is that door.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. v7,8

We have had ‘flesh three times, - now we have ‘loss’ or lost three times

Paul suddenly realises that he has been wasting his time, trusting in all the wrong things - the true reality of life is found in Jesus – who is God made man.

Now that he has made that great discovery Paul is ashamed of what he was once so proud of. **I consider them rubbish, ‘Skubalon’** that which is thrown to the dogs or refuse, or ‘dung’ the word means ‘dung’, that is how Paul sees all of his life in trying to please God before he knew Jesus Christ.

✦ **That is the sign of true conversion BTW, a hatred of how you once were before Jesus came to save you, before you came to know Him.**

The person of Jesus

We have seen what Paul renounced – Let us see what the apostle now had his heart upon – it was Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own - but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Paul now desired above all else to gain Christ, to win Christ; **as the runner wins the prize, as the sailor makes the port he is bound for.** You and I are to strive for him and after him, that nothing is more important than to be found in Him.

■ **Imagine a hall full of people waiting around for hours. On and on. Then suddenly they have the ticket or whatever it is, the person has seen them. Suddenly they are up and off. They have it. They have what they came for.**

Each of you here make sure you have Him. Don’t rest until you are found *in him*.

When someone says to me: “I want to be a Christian, or to be saved, or to make peace with God or be forgiven for all I have ever done”. Then I say “go and find a quiet place, get on your knees before the Lord and plead with Him to have mercy on you. Don’t get up until you know you have it, until you know you have Him. Is there someone here this morning still to do that?”

For this you have to strip away self. And put on the new, be clothed in Christ. **Let the demolition cranes come in and knock it all down, every brick, that you can start from scratch** with Him, Build only on Jesus Christ, the one true everlasting foundation. Have your confidence, - and thus your joy in Him.

You and I were made to know God!

In Isaiah 53 that great passage of the suffering servant it concludes with the phrase **By his knowledge, or the knowledge of him, shall my righteous servant justify many,** Isa 53:11. Knowing Him is the believers wonderful ‘experience’

This is the opposite of religious activity .., Jesus says to some, busy, active but false servants, **I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’** Matt 7:23 These are amongst the most chilling words in the Bible **I never knew you”**.

He says to those hoping to come in to the wedding but were foolish and unprepared **"Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ "But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’"** Matt 25:11-12

The Risen living Jesus Christ – He is alive now - Do you know Him, x2

Yes beware the door is closing soon - **"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ "But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’"**

What would you say? I have been following Jesus for years – But is the Jesus in your mind the Jesus who is there? Does your Jesus exist? Have you been following a mirage of your own making? That is what was going on then. **"Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ "But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’"** Luke 13:24-27

✦ **The plan of God, the desire of God when he made you is that you should know him, Glorify Him and enjoy Him for ever. This is why Christ came.**

This purpose of God is the reason for the New Covenant! **"No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."** Heb 8:11 from Jer 24

Yes a child, any person, anywhere has the capacity to know the God who made him – and came into this world to die for him or her. Christ is the person, the cross the way, and the message or the gospel of repentance the means for you to have it. Repent and you will receive – not try harder – you will receive Him.

- I can clearly recall my experience of 22nd Sept, 1985. ...expand..
Suddenly He was there. That is the moment Christ was revealed to me – and I knew Him and the father’s love - and I have since that moment always known Him – and will always know Him – even through death.

As the Lord had promised in Jeremiah **I will give them a heart to know me** Jer 24:7

Jesus himself said “**Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**” John 17:3

God’s Holy Spirit in a person brings Christ to me – and me to him – but also does the real reforming work. **For it is we who are the circumcision**, That is spiritual circumcision of the heart to love **we who worship by the Spirit of God.**

Genuine worship can never come from anything outward, anything that appeals to the flesh. I cannot enhance my worship with music, tamborines, exuberance or shouting. Not with flags, or coloured lights, or with cool building design.

So let our worship be out of love, genuine true worship to the father, through the Son and **by the Spirit of God.** Pleasing and honourable to him. x2

Finally

If you know Him - then you want what comes with Him ¹⁰ **I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,**

He ends up at the beginning, knowing Him means we understand His ways, we understand to know Him is to know not only great hope and Joy, but also to know trouble and suffering. Paul was suffering in prison, every Christian will suffer in some way.

✚ **The apostle was as keen on being sanctified - as he was of being justified.**

That means he knew daily the ongoing power of Christ’s death and resurrection killing off my sin, and being raised up in Him to newness of life.

To be crucified with Christ means to kill off all our fleshly desires as Paul said “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**” Gal 2:20

The apostle looked up, His eyes on heaven, his happiness in heaven confident – “because I know Him” he says – “because he lives – I too will live - I will be there” **and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.** 3:11.

No wonder he starts off with “1. **Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!** And it is ... **in the Lord** yes again and again we are reminded that it is **in the Lord**

✚ **Sing - All I once held dear - Knowing you. MP 799 _____END**