

## **Simply Knowing God**

The great Albert Einstein once said that you don't really know something; you don't really understand something ***unless you can explain it in a plain and simple way to your grandmother.*** Okay... ***but what about when the subject is God?*** Do you know God? I don't mean do you have mere knowledge of God; i.e., do you know ***about*** God. Even Atheists, Satanists, and all types of people in our culture who openly despise God and hate God know ***about*** God. Do you know God? Do you understand God well enough to explain God in a plain and simple way to your grandma, your children, your grandchildren, or anyone for that matter?

Well... maybe we need to break these questions down a bit. First off, can we truly know God? Is that even possible? **Absolutely.** In the Biblical, intimate sense of the word, to know God is to trust in God; to believe God and have faith in Him and His promises. Understood in this way, even the littlest of children can know God. In fact, the littlest of children probably know God better than any of us. In terms of knowing God, the apostle John states in his first epistle, "*Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*" Basically, when we love one another just as Jesus has loved us, we are showing/proving that we know God. We know His love. We understand. It also stands to reason, then, that those who claim to know God, but also treat others like trash; those who claim to know/love God, and yet despise His Word of Truth and willingly disobey His Word and live how they want to live rather than how He would have them to live... they prove by the fruits they bear that they ***really don't know Him at all.*** They may know the god of their own making that they mistakenly correlate with the God of Scripture. They may know the god they've fashioned in their own image and likeness; i.e., the god that approves of/condones their sinful ways (all the while condemning others for the same exact sins; funny how that works), but they really don't know the one true God; the eternal God; the just and loving God of Holy Scripture.

Now... just because we can know God through faith doesn't mean that we'll ever ***fully understand*** God. And I'm not talking about things like the doctrine of the Trinity or why some people hear the Word and believe while others hear the same Word and reject it. If God truly desires the death of no one, then why do so many hear the Word and reject it to their condemnation? I don't know. These are the mysterious things of God that we will **NEVER** understand; ***things that God doesn't give us to understand.*** But like I said, I'm talking about these things.

Look to this cross. This is what I'm talking about when I say that you will never be able to fully understand God. Here is the perfect, sinless, innocent Son of God Himself. This is how much God loves us, ***and I can't for the life of me***

***understand why!*** I may not know about all the sinful skeletons in your closet (and you have a bunch of ‘em! We all do!), ***but I know all about me.*** Why would God even waste a moment of time on a moron like me, let alone give His only-begotten Son to die for a sinful moron like me? I know my sinful reality, and I know what my sin deserves. I know what I would do if I were in charge, ***and it ain’t what this God does!*** ***What kind of God does this [crucifix]?!*** I don’t know. I don’t understand it. I can’t explain it.

And that’s just it. The mercy, the grace, the love of God is truly incomprehensible. You cannot comprehend it, ***and even in heaven you won’t be able to comprehend it.*** For the rest of eternity, you’ll be in awe of it. You’ll rejoice and praise Him for His mercy, grace, and love, but you will **NEVER** be able to truly comprehend it. It is truly unknowable... ***at least in all its fullness and glory.*** You will never be able to wrap your brain around the love that God has for you and for all children of Adam, even those folks who absolutely don’t deserve it.

And that brings up a couple of points we need to address before we call it a day. If you pay attention to the First Reading for today (Acts 1:12-26), you find that the apostles make it a point of filling the apostolic vacancy left by Judas. The apostolic band is down a guy, leaving them with only eleven men. **Eleven won’t do!** Why? Because the Good News of Christ crucified is for ***ALL*** people; all twelve tribes and nations of God’s people. No one is to be left out.

So... how does one come to know God? How does one come to know this incomprehensible love that God has for us and for all people? **Evangelism. Mission. Speaking and sharing the Word.** St. Paul tells us, “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? (You can’t believe or call on Him if you don’t know Him.) And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? [...] So faith comes through hearing; hearing the word of Christ.*”

All theology is Christology, right? All [true] knowledge/wisdom of God is knowledge/wisdom of Jesus Christ. From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21, ***every word, every jot and tittle and iota points to Jesus*** and is about God’s love for us in Jesus. You know God; you know God’s love for you and for all mankind by knowing Jesus. In fact, you cannot and do not truly know God **unless** you know Jesus! “*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” ***EVERYONE needs to hear this. EVERYONE!***

And what does this knowledge of Jesus look like/sound like in everyday life? Notice: I didn’t ask what it looks/sounds like ***for one hour on Sunday mornings.*** Churches are filled with people who don’t know the love of God for them in Christ. They prove they don’t truly know the love of God because in their own words, they’re working hard in the hopes of getting to heaven. Works-

righteousness proves you don't truly know the love of God for you in/through Christ. Again, St. John tells us very clearly what true knowledge of God looks like and sounds like in everyday life. *"We love because He first loved us. Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."* We love God and all others, not **just** because He first loved us, but because we know God; we know the love of God... for us and for all others. Look to the cross, and you will see this love of God.

And that's where the Revelation text appointed for today comes into play (Rev 22:1-6. 12-20). *"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with Me, to repay each one for what he has done."* Now, to Old Adam's ears, that sounds a lot like works-righteousness. Not only that, but it's pretty terrifying. Jesus is going to return, and He's coming to pay back everyone for what they've done. ***Gulp! Lord, have mercy!*** I don't know anyone who is so out of touch that they honestly believe they have nothing to repent over; nothing worthy of God's just and righteous punishment. This is why, though, in an attempt to assuage our fears, we reason that Jesus can't be referring to us because we're saved by grace. Jesus is coming to pay back people for what they've done, which can only mean wicked unbelievers, right? ***Wrong.***

You see, the original Greek makes clear that Jesus is returning, and He's bringing ***His misthos (wage/reward/recompense)*** with Him. Believe it or not, but "reward" is actually the best, most faithful translation here. The *misthos* Jesus is bringing with Him is the reward which He Himself earned, and which He freely gives as gift to all believers by grace. Yes, unbelievers get ***their misthos***; their wage; the wage for their sin of unbelief, which is death; the justly-deserved wage that ***they've earned*** by rejecting Christ. But Jesus says very clearly here that He is bringing ***"My misthos/reward."***

Folks: By virtue of your baptism into His all-redeeming death and resurrection, His victory is credited to you. His blood-bought wage that He earned with His perfect life and all-atoning death ***is your reward***, purely by God's good grace. Purely by God's grace, because we know and trust in Christ's all-atoning death and resurrection, we receive ***His reward***, which is the gift of eternal life in God's holy presence, earned for God's people by the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God. This "wage/reward" is represented by the tree of life (22:2, 14). These words of our Lord at this particular point in Revelation have **nothing** to do with those who don't know Him; those who reject Him, despise Him, hate Him, and mock Him. **They have no access to the Tree of Life.** *"Lord, let us in!" "Go away. I don't know you."* By this point in the book of Revelation, the unbelievers are out of the picture. They've already been cast into hell. This last chapter is only/all about those who trust in Jesus; who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

*"Yeah... but Jesus says that we're getting repaid for what we've done!"* Yup. We absolutely do receive His wage/reward for what **we've** done, ***and there's nothing works-righteous about it.*** Ask yourself: **What do believers do?** Answer:

They believe in Christ and His all-atoning sacrifice. They place their trust, their hope... their everything in Him. Just as important is what believers ***don't*** do. They ***don't*** try to work off their sins or pay for their sins. They ***don't*** try to earn their way into heaven, as if Jesus did some of the work, but they need to pick up the slack and do their part. Nope! *"You are saved by grace, through faith, and not by works, lest anyone should boast."* ***Faith that truly knows the love of God in Christ believes and holds fast to Christ alone. That's just what saving faith does, and it's that faith that receives Christ's reward.***

That said, I'll end by simply pointing to the cross of Jesus; to the love of God made flesh and hung on a cross, for you, for me, and for all children of Adam. This Good News, as you well-know, is for ***all people, all tribes, all races, all nations.*** You know this Good News. Now share it. Explain it. It isn't difficult. It's actually quite simple. *"We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to all those who are called—to all those who know this cruciform Truth and 'what does this mean'—this is Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."* ***This is Christ, the love of God.*** Maybe the simplest way to explain it: *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."* It's that simple; so simple that even the littlest and lowliest can know it, believe it, hold fast to it, ***and explain it.*** (Like I said, I'd argue that the littlest ones know it the best, which is why our Lord calls us to have the faith of little children.)

May this Love of God for you in Christ; this peace which surpasses all human knowledge and understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Him, now and into all eternity.

**AMEN**