

“What’s the point of knowing God?” John 17:1-11

“When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

For our meditations today we will choose just one sentence from our today’s Gospel reading. “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Or we could put it as: “This is eternal life if you know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.” Now the question for us: “Do you know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent?”

Do you really? And what’s the point of knowing Him? This is what we are going to reflect on today. It may get uncomfortable. We will ask some challenging questions and, please, try to consider them as honestly as you can, and, please, listen till the end.

One of our problems, and would say that it is one of the obvious signs and expressions of our sinfulness, is our ignorance when it comes to the most important questions about God and our relationships with Him. And not just ignorance, that could be fixed.

But, also, arrogance and unwillingness to engage with these questions. It is not just that we are ignorant, we also deliberately want to remain ignorant, we want to be ignorant on purpose. We want NOT to engage and we want NOT to know.

“No, I am good, I don’t want to know anything else, I don’t need to know anything else, I am fine, just leave me be.” What our attitude essentially says is: “Yes, I don’t know about this God, but I really can’t be bothered about it.”

You may have witnessed such attitudes in different forms. Not just in others, also in ourselves. Some people are openly rejecting anything that has to do with the one true God. But then there are many who would self-identity as Christians, sometimes with

great passion, even if they are not practicing Christians. What I mean by that is that they are not active in any congregation, they don't worship, don't listen to preaching and teaching, don't read the Scriptures, don't share the Gospel with others, it seems that they have decided that they can somehow be Christians on their own terms.

You would have heard some of these excuses. "I have my faith. I believe in a god. Do I really need to go to church, and to study the Bible to be a Christian?" Or even: "I know that I am saved and forgiven. I don't need the Church." May be this is what you believe and say when asked about your relationships with God. Then listen to the end!

But then there are those who are active members in their congregations, they may sit on boards and be busy in committees and on different rosters, they may be among elders in their congregations, they may be even pastoring congregations, but who still don't have much interest in knowing Jesus.

Perhaps you are thinking, ups! our pastor is going too far. What is he saying? That it is possible that someone, who is an active member in their congregation, or even a pastor, still doesn't know the one true God and Jesus Christ?

This is exactly what the Bible teaches us and I am challenging you to examine yourselves, no one else can do this for you. Now is the time! Do you remember, who were the most passionate opponents of Jesus? Was it the open sinners? No!

Those were the religious people. Those were the most active "church goers", the most moral people, even the teachers of the Bible. They were those who didn't like Jesus' message and they didn't like Jesus. This is what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'" (Mt 7:21-23)

He isn't saying this about the unbelievers. He is saying this about those who think that they are God's people. Another example. Jesus invited His religious listeners to remain in His words, for that is what truly makes someone His disciple, but they... got upset.

Then Jesus said: "If God were your Father, you would love me... Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires." (John 8:42-44)

Wow, that's harsh, Jesus! But to whom did He say it? Not to some open sinners, not to some followers of other religions. He said this to those very religious folks, who were in the Church every Sabbath and kept all the laws that they could.

So, yes, this is what the Bible teaches – that many who think that they are Christians, who act at least partly as Christians, in fact are ... from a different father. They don't know the true God and Jesus Christ, and worse – they don't want to know Him.

They are happy to be a part of the Church, to go through the motions, to be good and moral people in their communities, but they may be as far from knowing Jesus and the Father as any other unbeliever. How can this be?

Because this is not so much about what we do or don't do, belong or don't, but about the attitudes of our hearts. Let's look at a couple of examples, I hope they will help us to understand these important matters better.

What kind of an attitude is that when someone says, as we mentioned above, that they have their faith, or that they believe in a god, or that they believe that they are saved by grace, and at the same time – they run from Jesus and His word like fire?

Or even more, they may actually be active members in their congregation, but then still their lunches and other activities are always more important than their time in the fellowship of saints in the presence of our God. What does it tell about their hearts?

Our first illustration. The Bible speaks about our relationships with God using the analogy of marriage. Jesus is our bridegroom, and the Church is His bride. Now, what would a good marriage look like? What about this attitude?

“I believe that my spouse exists, I believe I am married, but I really don't need to get to know my spouse, or be together with him/her, I am good. Are you telling me that I need to be with him/her? And how many times per year do I need to do that?” Would such attitude make any sense? By the way, I really hope that your answer is “no”.

Have you ever loved someone? If you love someone, you want to be with them, you are catching every word coming from their mouth, there is never enough of the other person, you are always thirsty for more. It should be the same with us in our relationship with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit... Is it?

Another illustration. How many of you recognize the name of Dr Jordan Peterson? He is Canadian psychologist who became famous because he opposed attempts to introduce speech control that would punish those who said something politically incorrect.

He quickly became a true champion against all the many ideologies that plagues Western society. Almost overnight he became worldwide celebrity. He is really smart, sharp and caring, honest and courageous to speak the truth. He wins his arguments with knowledge and wit, and not with bullying and slander as is a commonplace these days.

He was continually attacked by mainstream media, by those who claim to be virtuous, while many and many on the margins were lifted up, encouraged, their lives improved and transformed, and so on. His core message was simple and appealing.

“Life is hard, speak the truth, be responsible for your life, and try to be as useful as possible.” It's not the Gospel, it is the Law, and just a part of it, but even that was found as extremely appealing by many thirsty souls in our secular Western society.

Why do I mention this? Without doubt Dr Peterson is intelligent and attractive a personality. Many and many like him, you could even say – love him, want to listen to

him, want to get to know him. Just think about these numbers, – his book is printed in millions of copies in dozens of languages. His YouTube channel has almost three million followers. His videos have been watched hundreds of millions of times.

Young adults were discussing what was the latest from Dr Peterson and telling others what a great guy he is. In two years he travelled to some 150 cities around the world and spoke in front of hundreds of thousands of people. They all paid a good price for tickets just to get to see him, to listen to him, and, if possible, to have a brief chat with him after the formal presentation. They wanted to know him...

To get as close to him as possible. And he wasn't even the king Solomon. But, "see, something [infinitely] greater than Solomon is here!" (Luke 11:31) Dr Peterson was telling the truth according to his abilities, but he wasn't the Truth.

Dr Peterson was improving people's lives, but he wasn't the Life, and he didn't lay down his life for others. He was showing people a better way forward, but he wasn't the Way. His insights enlightened many, but he wasn't the Light. And even then, so many wanted to know him... with their whole heart.

What can we say? Here is Someone infinitely greater than all the greatest human teachers together. Someone infinitely more attractive, infinitely more beautiful, wiser, more powerful, more gracious, and caring, and loving, and faithful. Infinitely so...

Do you know Him? Do you want to know Him? How can we marvel about His beauty and loyalty if we don't know Him? How can we tell others about His awesome and gracious personality and His divine wisdom, if we don't listen to Him?

And if we are not interested in knowing Him, if we are not surprised and attracted by Him, why would we tell others about Him? What could we tell? And why would others be interested in knowing someone whom even Christians are not interested to know? It is no wonder that the Church shrinks in the West. There is on one else to blame, but us.

You see, to really know someone it is not enough to read their books or watch their videos, you need more. If you really want to know someone it requires relationships. Spending time together. It requires both parties to be willing to open up and to invite the other in. It requires conversations.

We may not have time for the only true God, but He has all the time for you. We may not be interested to know Him, but He really wants to know you and He wants you to know Him. This is why He sent Jesus Christ. This is why He keeps sending the Holy Spirit. This is why He keeps speaking to us and invites us to respond in prayer.

No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws them. No one can desire to know Jesus unless the Holy Spirit has already created in them a new heart. No one can come to the Father and to fully know Him except through Jesus.

If you are listening this, the only true God has been drawing you to Himself. He wants you to know Him. He wants to bless you. If you respond to God's invitation, if you don't reject the gentle call of the Holy Spirit, if you listen to the words of Jesus, you will get to

know the only true God as your Father in heaven. And be assured, that is more than you could have ever dreamed about. He wants to be known not just intellectually. He invites you to share in the inner life of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

To experience God's presence with your whole being. To be filled with His Spirit, to be enfolded by His almighty and protective arms. Listening as Jesus speaks to you His truth, His love, His wisdom. Experiencing how He nourishes you in the community of His saints. And all of that with a clear purpose in mind – to give you eternal life.

To enable you one day to see this most intelligent and beautiful and loving Person face-to-face. So that on that day you could know Him as He is. For that is Jesus' promise that if you want to know Him, you will see Him as He is.

I pray that the Holy Spirit help us all to run away from our ignorance as from a plague and straight into the open arms of our Father and our brother Jesus, who longs for us, so that we all could receive His ultimate gift – eternal life in His presence.

And that's the point of knowing the only true God!

Amen.