

“KNOWING GOD & MAKING GOD KNOWN” (5/16/10)

SCRIPTURES: Acts 1: 1-11 & John 17: 20-26

KEY CONCEPTS: What is the primary purpose for following of Christ & how might that purpose be lived out?

CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks,

Q: “What is the chief end of man?”

A: Man’s chief end is to glorify God & to enjoy Him forever.

The Westminster Larger Catechism frames the question like this:

Q: What is the chief & highest end of man?

A: *Man’s chief & highest end is to glorify God & fully to enjoy him forever.*

The modifications, I’d make – as you might imagine – is to inclusify the catechismic quote.

Q: What is the primary purpose of all humanity?

A: *The chief end & duty of all humanity is to know God, to love God and to fully enjoy God forever.*

WILL YOU PRAY WITH ME?

PRAYER:

OPENING THOUGHTS:

So, what if our primary spiritual purpose is to know God, to love/glorify God & to enjoy God forever? What might that look like in contemporary times? And are we fulfilling our spiritual purpose on this the 7th Sunday of Easter & the final Sunday before Pentecost?

NEW TESTAMENT READING – ACTS 1: 1-11: (ONLINE READING)

In today’s reading from the book of Acts, we hear the words that pertained to Jesus’ Ascension (which was actually May 13 this year). In exploring this text regarding “knowing God & then making God known” we consider these thoughts.

- The book of Acts begins with Jesus’ ascension
- Overall, the book portrays the acts of Peter (& then Paul) regarding the dramatic birth & rapid expansion of the early Church – see Acts, chapter 2 & following.
- The author, more than likely Luke, wrote to recount the disciples commitment & continuity to Jesus – as they were witnesses to His earthly ministry
- Luke also recounted the social & theological problems for the Church as it related to its Jewish heritage & its Greco-Roman cultural & political environment.
- The challenges of the 1st century Church – as recounted in the book of Acts – makes for an excellent source for social analysis of the contemporary Church.

One of the things I love about this passage is that it recounts what amounts to the final words of Jesus before He left the earth. AND you know, someone’s last words are important – especially when you know (& recognize) that there are “your last words”. In summary, Jesus’ last words – at least from this rendering was:

1. ***WAIT ON GOD*** – God will equip you with the Holy Spirit. (Verse 5)
2. ***SOME THINGS ARE NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS*** – Power will come from the Holy Spirit & this is YOUR business....
3. ***WHAT THINGS ARE YOUR BUSINESS*** – To be faithful witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria & to the ends of the earth.

GENERAL APPLICATION:

So, how might this all look as we apply only these final words of Jesus for our lives today?

WAIT ON GOD:

Particularly, we are often called to “wait on God” because God needs to work out some of the details of our lives. In this instance; however, the instruction seems to be “to wait until you’re equipped & empowered to reach out & make God known to others.” In reality, we all have equal access to God, to God’s Spirit & to the power of God to serve others AND to serve within the Church of Jesus the Christ. So...why aren’t we? Or maybe the better question might be why won’t we?

SOME THINGS ARE NONE OF OUR BUSINESS:

Put another way, we spend much of our time asking the wrong question OR we ask a good question for the wrong reasons? Why do you suppose the disciples wanted to know about restoring the “kingdom of Israel”?

I think they asked because they wanted to insure they would be the ones with the power & authority once Jesus left the earth. Jesus deflected the question, telling them it was not for them to know the times or periods of God’s planning. However, God DID have a major plan for them....

THE THINGS THAT ARE OUR BUSINESS:

Historically, Acts 1:8 has been viewed as similar to Matthew’s “Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20). Luke calls for the disciples to be witnesses to the life, ministry & truths of Jesus the Christ in what have called “concentric circles of influence”

- **Jerusalem:** Often seen as the center of not only Jewish heritage, but also the birth place of Jesus’ life, ministry & Pentecost
- **Judea:** Often seen as the next larger area of influence.
- **Samaria:** Often seen as the homeland of “enemies”, i.e. outcasts, mixed races, etc.
- **Ends of the Earth:** Often seen as “all the rest of the world” – both known & unknown

As followers of Christ, we are called to bear witness to what we have witnessed & experienced as a result of our encounter with God through Christ. Simply put, that is how we make Christ known in the 21st century...by telling our story – as it pertains to God’s working in our lives, in our homes & in our relationships.

GOSPEL READING – JOHN 17: 20-26:

And speaking of relationships...in John’s rendering of Jesus’ final prayer before He was arrested, a highly Christological rendering was noted. Today’s verses noted a prayer for “future believers” – for us here today.

That we might believe in God because Jesus & God were one; that Jesus made a way for us to have access to God & that because of those relationships – above all else – human beings would experience amazing love & be changed forever.

CLOSING:

What do you know of God? How has Jesus Christ been in your life & made God known to you? AND are you willing to allow God’s Spirit to use you to speak words of comfort, compassion & commitment on behalf of Christ & for the good of this local Church – Our Hope MCC?