

**“To Know God”  
(John 17:1-5)  
Pastor Peter Yi  
March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

**Introduction:**

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem to live out the last week of his life with incredible focus and commitment to the mission that God, his Father had given Him: to die a brutal death on a roman cross—one of the most brutal and cruel forms of execution man has ever invented, in order to save people from God’s punishment for their sins.

Why did Jesus die? He died to satisfy the absolute and pure justice of God toward human sin. Since God is a just God, it would be unjust of him to allow human sin and wrongs to go unpunished. And because God is absolutely pure and holy, all sin that is committed is absolutely sinful and unholy, and is therefore worthy of punishment before a just and holy God. But the bible says that because God loves rebels and sinners, because God loves people who cheat on their taxes, and folks that are mean to their spouses, and those who only care about themselves, and those who are sexually impure (heterosexually or homosexually), and those with major anger issues, and those who use people for their own gain, and those who commit white collar crimes—because he loves them all, he allowed his only Son, Jesus, to die and suffer the punishment of every sinner and rebel, so that we could have eternal life.

Eternal life...think about that phrase for a moment. Eternal life. Is that our destiny? Is that what we’re living for? Is eternal life that great? Most people, I think, if you were to ask, ‘What are you living for?’, or ‘What’s the most important thing?’, I don’t think that out of 100 people asked, even in this room, you would hear the words, “eternal life.” Wouldn’t you agree? I mean, how many of you would have answered that way? Eternal life is only *really* good, is only the greatest thing, pending the definition or the quality of the word ‘life’, right? Would eternal life be great if we in a vegetative state, being kept alive by machines, with little or no brain activity, and no interaction with others? Would eternal life be great if that life meant you get to be 8 or 80 years old...forever? I don’t think that’d be that great. What is it that is going to make eternal life so great? Don’t you want to know?! I want to know!

Well, let’s take a look at what the bible says.

In the passion and death narrative in the book of John, we have some material that’s not found in any of the other three gospels. In the other three gospels, you don’t see Jesus speaking a whole lot, other than at the last supper, and then a few words or answers, here and there during his trial and execution. But in John, Jesus talks and prays and there are a lot of words that he speaks. And one of the most powerful and beautiful moments is his lengthy prayer found in John 17. In this prayer, he prays for his twelve disciples and then he prays for every following generation of disciples. He prays for their protection in a hostile world that crucifies innocent pacifists. He prays for their sanctification, that they would become holy. And then powerfully he prays for the unity of all believers, all of his followers, for the church. The unity he prays for is the same unity that is shared between God the Father and God the Son. And then he concludes saying that the love God has for Jesus would be in his followers, and that Jesus himself would be in them.

But at the beginning of this prayer that Jesus prayed to God, we learn something incredible about what eternal life is.

Let's read this passage:

*<sup>1</sup> After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup> For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup> Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.*

So did you catch the definition: Let's read verse three again.

Eternal life is to know God, the only true God, as opposed to any other competitors out there. Only the Father of Jesus Christ, the Creator of heaven and earth, the eternal one who knew no beginning and knows no end, the one who contains within him all power, all knowledge, all wisdom, and justice, mercy and love. He and only He is God, and to know Him is to have eternal life. Do you know him? Do you have eternal life?

In addition to that, eternal life is to know Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's only Son, 100% God and 100% man; chosen, anointed (that's what Christ means), sent by God into this world, born of a virgin named Mary, grew up for 30 years in Palestine; conducted a public ministry over three years, telling people to repent and believe in Him. He was later crucified for the sins of the whole world and then rose again victoriously from the grave, and went back to heaven to sit at the right hand of God Almighty, in order to have authority over the whole cosmos and intercede and pray for his people. To know that Jesus is to have eternal life. Do you know him? Do you have eternal life?

But what does it mean to know God, to know Jesus?

Well, here's what it doesn't mean.

1. It doesn't mean just knowing the facts about God. Anybody can learn the cold hard facts about God, but it doesn't mean they know God. Sports enthusiasts can memorize incredible volumes of facts and information on their favorite athletes, but they don't know the athletes.

Let me clarify that knowledge is absolutely essential to know God. Without God revealing precious information and truth and facts about himself, we would never ever be able to know Him. In fact, that's why he communicates through visions, dreams, messengers, prophets, angels, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and the bible.

But it takes more than just facts to know God.

2. Nor does it mean second hand knowledge. There are people who say they know God because my parents knew God. My parents were Christians, they went to church, so by default I'm a Christian, by default I know God, and so by default I go to church...when I can. Sorry to break this to you...but the only default people in the bible are default sinners. There are no default saints. There are no such things as default Christians. The only default people in the bible are sinners that already stand on death row, awaiting their execution. So, that's all second hand knowledge of God will get you. We need more than that.

So what does it mean to know God?

Well, John, the same author of the gospel wrote 3 letters as well as the book of Revelation. Look with me to 1 John 5:11-13.

*<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

From this passage we can learn something about what it means to 'know God' and to 'know Jesus.' In this passage John says eternal life is having the Son of God, right? What does 'to have the Son of God' mean? It means you possess him...to have something is to possess something. But you don't really possess people right? *What does it mean when someone asks me, "Do you have a wife? Do you have children?" Yes, they're locked up in my basement as we speak. Or I bought them at the market...I got them for a reasonable price. Of course it doesn't mean that. It means, "Yes, I am in the most exclusive, monogamous, and intimate relationship possible this side of heaven, with a person I know as my wife. She knows me inside and out. And I know her the same." In an ideal world, isn't that what having a wife is supposed to mean?*

Now apply that to Jesus. Do you have Jesus? "Yes, he's on a picture on the wall in my living room." "Yes, he's a statue on a piece of jewelry I sometimes wear around my neck." "Yes, he's the person for which my parents go to church and have dragged me with them for most of my life." EHHHHHH, wrong answer. Let's try again. Do you have Jesus? "Yes, I am in a living, exclusive, and intimate relationship with a person named Jesus. I know him very well. And more importantly, he knows me better than I know myself. He died for my sins and I know I'm forgiven and am now his brother, and God is my Father. Do I know Jesus? Yes, without a doubt, I love Jesus, I know Jesus."

And then one more passage:

John 20:31

*But these are written [the whole gospel] that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life [eternal life] in his name.*

We know already that to have eternal life is to know God, to know Jesus. But from this passage we learn something else. We learn the means to obtaining this eternal life.

One word: Believe.

The whole 21 chapters of John was written...wait...in fact, the whole 66 books of the bible, both New and Old Testaments were written for a singular purpose. "That you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

The means to knowing God, knowing Jesus, having eternal life, is through believing. Believing with head and heart that a man named Jesus, 2000 years ago, who was God and man, lived a perfect life, and loved you and me so much that he died on a cross to take upon himself, the judgment and punishment of God, so that if only we would believe in him, we would not perish, but have eternal life.

Friends have you obtained eternal life by believing in Jesus?

It's so simple. If you would just humble yourself before him and simple go through the ABCs.— admit, believe, commit, then Jesus will forgive you, he'll enter your life, he'll change you forever from the inside out, and you get to spend eternity knowing and being known by Him.

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Believers, this is passion week...the most cherished week for the most cherished weekend, for the most cherished day in world history. Use this week wisely. You can read the back of the bulletin for some pointers that I've jotted down. But more than anything, spend time knowing and loving Jesus.

