

Knowing

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him (John 14:7, *KJV*).

Scripture: John 14:1-14

Song: “I Want to Know You”

Horses and I share a mutual misunderstanding, which explains why I’m not much of a horseback rider. Good riders spend time with their horses, getting to know them. Also, they understand their animal’s body language, which enables them to anticipate what their mounts will do in different situations. All of this takes quality time for both man and his four-legged friend.

Because I’m seldom around horses, I’ve only read a few things about them. Oh, I know a smattering of horse facts and a few breed names, but I neither really know nor understand them. Similarly, we may know what the Bible teaches, we can talk about Jesus and even quote verses; but really knowing Him isn’t mere head knowledge. It goes beyond this.

Knowing Christ means having a relationship with Him. It means spending time with Him, becoming more like Him. Only then will we grow in wisdom and grace. Kneel before Him in prayer, worship Him with all our hearts, attend a good church, read and study His Word. To know and understand anything takes a sacrifice of our time. Since Christ sacrificed himself for us and loves us so much, He’s the most important one we need to know. Let’s all spend quality time with Him today.

Dear Lord, thank You for sending Jesus to offer himself as a sacrifice for my sins. Help me to sacrifice my time so that I may spend time with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

July 27

The Mystery

The mystery [of the word of God] that has been kept hidden for ages and generations . . . is now disclosed to the Lord's people (Colossians 1:26).

Scripture: Colossians 1:24-29

Song: "More About Jesus"

My friend says, "There is nothing like a good mystery." Or is there? I used to like to follow Sherlock Holmes on his adventures or solve a whodunit game. But recently my mysteries come more in the form of "Where are my glasses?" or "What did I come in here for?" I've discovered that the real enjoyment is not in the mystery, but in its revealing!

God kept a secret, a mystery, for ages and generations, but He also gave His chosen people clues about the future. It has been said, "The new is in the old concealed, and the old is in the new revealed." There are Old Testament types, shadows, and even God-directed visits that led toward understanding, but still contained the mystery.

Paul rejoiced that he could now present the Word in its fullness. He could share with us the revelation of the mystery, which is Christ in us (v. 27). We can now have assurance of forgiveness and salvation through the Holy Spirit, who indwells each believer. It's no longer a mystery, but an opportunity to praise God!

Father, we praise You for revealing the mystery of Your plan, purpose, and great love. In our Savior's name, amen.

Mercy

[Our Savior] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy (Titus 3:5).

Scripture: Titus 3:3-7

Song: “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”

I taught a large class required of all majors in the college. When I gave a test, I had to have two versions to ensure that students did their own work. On the front of each version was a special code. At the beginning and end of the test period, I made special efforts (think heroic) to focus students on correct coding, because if they got this wrong they would fail the test. On one occasion, when grades had been posted, a highly distressed young man came to my office saying he didn’t understand why he had failed the test.

Looking at his test we found he had incorrectly coded it. I reviewed with him all the warnings I had made about incorrect coding and the penalty of failing. He admitted he remembered these. I then pointed out that what he was really seeking was not justice, but mercy. So I required that he write a short essay on mercy in exchange for a re-grading of his test!

We have a just God who has repeatedly warned us that we are clearly guilty sinners before Him and that there are penalties. Our goodness doesn’t cover or excuse our sin. It is simply inadequate to dismiss the penalty. God would be totally just if He simply assessed the penalty and went on. But because of His mercy, His great mercy, He saves us by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gracious Father, thank You for Your mercy. Thank You for Jesus. Amen.

July 29

Good Gifts

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children . . .” (Luke 11:13).

Scripture: Luke 11:9-13

Song: “Give Thanks”

What was the best gift you ever received? As the oldest child in my family, I knew my parents were struggling financially and it was difficult for them to buy gifts for us on birthdays and at Christmas. I always marveled at how they could take used items and make them like new, or how they were able to find new things at absolute bargain-basement prices. One Christmas I wanted to learn how to play the guitar, but knew it was probably out of reach and that lessons were beyond possibility. So I resigned myself to reality—it would be a Christmas without music!

On Christmas morning, though, my eyes got as big as baby moon hubcaps! Beneath the tree was a new guitar. It wasn't name-branded or full size, but it made guitar sounds! My friends began to teach me what they knew, and we practiced together. Soon we had a small community singing group that resulted in great times.

God delights in giving us truly good gifts. Things we never expected turn out to be absolute blessings. Without question, the best gift I ever received was not that guitar, but salvation through the work of the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. God's love changed my life! Later He added a special plus, the love and life friendship of the most beautiful girl in the world.

Jehovah Jireh, thank You for blessing us with truly good gifts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Understanding Suffering

We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3, 4).

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5

Song: “Rejoice, the Lord Is King”

Where I live, it seems that every street corner is being rebuilt into an emergency health facility. Banks are a close second, followed by coffee shops. Why has emergency health care become a profit center? For nonmedical people this is hard to understand, but there are likely several reasons. Among them is simply the huge number of people afflicted with a variety of health issues. All have one thing in common: they are suffering. I am struck by the number of people I meet who suffer health issues.

Suffering is one of the hardest things for a child of God to understand. Often our minds fill with questions. Why me? Why am I suffering, Lord? After all, Your Word is clear—You are the one who heals even the most difficult cases. We know You allow suffering but are not the cause of it, so why are You allowing this?

Perhaps why is the wrong starting point. Maybe the better question is, “Lord, what are You teaching me in my suffering?” Suffering is easier to bear if we understand God has a purpose for us. Today’s Scripture presents a growth process that is at work in our suffering. God intends to move us from suffering to perseverance, then on to character, and then on to hope. The hope of becoming more like Jesus.

Father, lead us to submit to Your total healing of our body, soul, and spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Defeating Evil

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die (Romans 5:7).

Scripture: Romans 5:6-11

Song: “Victory in Jesus”

In 1942, my father coached a college baseball team in southeast Kansas. The players seemed so full of life and fun, they became my heroes. Then things became more serious. Perhaps it was the highly charged atmosphere because the team was close to winning the national championship. But there seemed more to it.

In the evenings my family often went for ice cream to the creamery by the train depot. We began to see the troop trains coming through town. Young men, like my heroes, would jump off the train joking and laughing to get a candy bar before it left. They had willingly decided to volunteer their lives in defense of America at a time of great peril. What we all didn't realize was the price it would take to defeat that evil; some of these young men were not coming back. They didn't intend to die for their country, but the possibility of daring to die was there. They were making a choice of country over self to keep little kids like me safe and free. Their willingness to die sacrificially comes as close to our Scripture verse today as I can envision.

God offers the perfect solution to defeat evil permanently. It too required a great sacrifice of life: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Will you accept His demonstration of love today?

Father, we are overwhelmed by the power of Your love. In Jesus' name, amen.

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