

Knowing God: Life's Major Pursuit

Text: Jeremiah 9:1-24

Intr:

Prophets in the O. T. were never easygoing people
... they never were and never will be.

Prophets were men of God who made their listeners
uncomfortable most of the time with the message
they brought.

One thing they always seemed to accomplish they
made their listeners think.

They didn't become prophets because they
attended a Bible college or a Seminary.

The original Disciples of Christ were fishermen,
farmers, tax collectors and such, interestingly none
of them came from the school of learning.

One of our modern day prophets today was in
politics and then spent some time in prison and
many of you have read some of his words, his
name is Chuck Colson.

In reading some of Chuck Colson's works, I find he
is a man who doesn't mess around when he wants
to say something, he just says it.

Now, I'm talking about a modern day Christian
disciple of Christ who says,

"Our world is filled with self-absorbed, frightened,
hollow people . . . And in the midst of all this we
have the church – those who follow Christ. For the
church, this ought to be an hour of opportunity. The
church alone can provide a moral vision to a
wandering people; the church alone can step into
the vacuum and demonstrate that there is a
sovereign, living God who is the source of Truth.

BUT, the church is in almost as much trouble as the
culture, for the church has brought into the same
value system: fame, success, materialism, and
celebrity. We watch the leading churches and the
leading Christians for our cues. We want to
emulate the best-known preachers with the biggest
sanctuaries and the grandest edifices.

Preoccupation with these values has also perverted
the church's message. The assistant to one
renowned media pastor, when asked the key to his
man's success, replied without hesitation, "We give
the people what they want." This heresy is at the
root of the most dangerous message preached
today: the what's-in-it-for me gospel."

3

With this in mind this morning, I want to preach to you my second sermon on Discipleship entitled: **KNOWING GOD: LIFE'S MAJOR PURSUIT**

I am more convinced than ever before in the day in which we live the greatest need every one of us needs in our life is KNOWING GOD AND KNOWING HIM MORE.

As a matter of fact, unless God is the major pursuit of our lives, all other pursuits in life are a dead end street.

All other avenues will fail.

They won't satisfy!

They won't result in fulfillment!

They won't do for us what we think they will do.

You and I never are fulfilled until we come to know God in His fullness.

This process of Discipleship is the process of coming to know God.

I. The Wail of a Weeping Prophet

Let's take a journey into the past and go back in time to about 2500 years ago.

4

Jeremiah is called "***The Weeping Prophet.***"

Here is a man of God who saw what lay ahead – far ahead of his times.

He found himself surrounded by the streams of human depravity and he wept over the condition of his people – people who knew better – people who had been instructed for centuries to know and walk with their God.

But they had deliberately and willfully turned away from the Word of their God.

Instead of turning to Him, they went after their own pursuits, which resulted in a downward spiral of self-destruction.

Because of this their nation disintegrated from a super - powerful nation to a weak and vulnerable nation.

Could that somehow be the case for our beloved nation evolving from a super power to a very vulnerable nation?

Jeremiah wrote these tragic words in verse 1: "***O that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people.***"

5

The picture of what is happening is not pretty! –
But it is realistic.

In effect, Jeremiah says, “My people are goners!
My people lack the strength and courage they once
had!”

In other words, those who once were strong in the
Lord and now weak and about to be destroyed.

And in verse 2 Jeremiah tells us what he wanted to
do, **“Oh, that I had in the desert a lodging place
for travelers, so that I might leave my people
and go away from them; for they are all
adulterers and a crowd of unfaithful people.”**

How many of you can relate to that?

In today’s terms we might say, “Oh, that I could
escape to a condo in Palm Springs, Florida and get
out of this mess, this moral filth and carnality that I
see even in the church where I am living.”

Jeremiah just wanted to get away from it all!

He wanted to escape.

Why? Because Sin was rampant everywhere.
Carnality was evident in his people.

Jeremiah explains what these people looked like
when he said in 2b-3

6

**“for all of them are adulterers, an assembly of
treacherous men. And they bend their tongues
like a bow, to shoot lies; it is not by truth that
they triumph in the land. They go from one sin
to another sin; they do not acknowledge me,
declares the Lord.”**

Jeremiah wails, **“Everywhere I turn I seek for
truth and I hear lies. I look for faithfulness and I
find unfaithfulness. I look for people who are
gentle, kind, caring, encouraging, and I find
treachery, murder, assault, rape. I look in vain
to find the things that are to characterize the
people of God.”**

“And the Lord declares, they do not know me.”

Now I want to drop down to verse 23 – let’s read it
together:

**“Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or
the strong man boast of his strength or the rich
man boast of his riches ...”**

Let’s don’t miss this truth! What does this really
mean?

Do you know what people pursue when their eyes
are on themselves and not on God?

It ends up in what Chuck Colson described in his
statement:

7

Human wisdom
Human might
Human riches

And I ask you is this not relevant to our society in which we live in?

Doesn't this sound like the world we live in today?

The world we live in today answers this by saying:

I want to be resourceful
I want to be influential
I want to be powerful
I want to be successful
I want to be in charge
I want to run things
I want to control people
I want to make a name for myself

In verse 23 we don't read one single thing about the living God.

But in verse 24 it reads, ***“But let him or her who boasts boast about this: that they understand and knows Me, that I am the Lord...”***

What is it that will make an unfaithful man faithful?

What is it that will make an influential man who's controlling people a servant?

8

What is it that will cause an individual who has turned to treachery to become gentle and gracious and giving, demonstrating a heart for God?

The answer to all those is understanding and knowing the living God.

Let's go back to verse 24 and let me take the word, ***“Understand”*** and let's try to get it in our minds.

In the original Hebrew text it means to have a correct ***“Insight”*** into the thing being addressed.

What I'm talking about is not popular in the work force today.

You'll never be in the majority when you take this stand.

But you will find happiness.

You'll discover what life is all about if you have correct insight – if you have correct understanding of what it means to be a True follower of Jesus Christ.

And when you conform your life towards the character of the living God and His Son Jesus, you'll find more success than you ever thought possible.

Look at the next word: **“Know”**

It's a knowledge of pursuing the character of an Almighty God.

Something happens inside of us that causes us to desire to learn more about Him and what He wants for us.

It's focusing on God.

It's being motivated by God's Spirit.

It's hard to put it into words, but it pursues more and more the things of God because you get to KNOW Him more.

And when you put the two words together, **UNDERSTAND AND KNOW** something happens to us that wants to focus on the living God.

As I look over the crowd this morning, I have asked myself, "How many believers in this dome this morning are really trying to Understand and they really Know what it means to pursue God?"

Do you really want to learn more about God?

Do you have a desire in your spiritual life to know God?

Do you really want to understand His ways?

I'm not talking about theology.

What I'm talking about is not that! I'm talking about understanding life's situations through the lens of God's plan for your life.

Do I really understand that ***"All thing work together for the God of those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose."***

Do I really understand or try to understand that God is working when I allow Him to – He's working in such a way that it will come back as good if I trust Him?

II. The Importance of Knowing God

God has given to us a general revelation of Himself in the heavens.

In Psalm 19:1 it reads, ***"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."***

We look up into the skies at night on a clear evening and see the stars and if we were to do a serious study of the galaxies, we would understand that this just didn't happen.

Whenever I go to ocean, I can count on the tides coming in at a certain time and going out at a certain time.

11

When I see a very dark sky coming from the west toward me, I gather very quickly rain is on the way.

Folks, it doesn't just happen.

Now, all of this brings me to the point in this sermon where I want to deal with **the Five Reasons it's important to better know God.**

1) Knowing God gives us the desire to be like Him. Verse 24

“Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.”

It's interesting isn't it, that when the Lord talks about Himself, He reveals His attributes, His character traits:

Loving kindness,
Justice
Righteousness

When we read I Peter 1:16, it reads, ***“You shall be holy, for I am holy.”***

We've all heard that the most natural thing we can do is to grow up becoming like our parents, even when we don't want to become like them.

12

I've heard people say, “When I grow up, I'm not gonna be like my father or mother!”
Yet when they grow up they are just like them.
WHY? Because they've been around their parents for so long their parents thumbprints are indelibly imprinted on their lives.

Application:

That's the way it is with God our Father.

The more I get to know my God, the more I become like Him in His characteristics.

He's holy, so I want to be holy.

My grandson, Lucas copies just about everything I do whenever he's around me. I conclude that he wants to be like his Papaw!

I discover that God is good; I want to be better.
I discover that God is strong; I want to be more confident.

I discover that God is in control; I don't want to panic my way through life.

I want to be like my Father. And in order for me to be like Him, I need to know what He is like.

2) Knowing God reveals the truth about ourselves.

13

A glance into the sixth chapter of Isaiah will help us in this fact.

King Uzziah died. I understand from this incident that Isaiah was very close to the king, and as a result he went to the place of worship.

While he was there worshipping, he observed the living God. Imagine what Isaiah saw:

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.” Isa 6:1-2

And these seraphim are crying out loud, ***“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts.”***

One says it and they echoes it, and the other rebounds it. THE WHOLE THRONE IS FILLED WITH GOD’S GLORY!

And then something happened to Isaiah – when seeing the Lord high and lifted up – Isaiah gets a glimpse of himself and he said,

“Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips.” V.5

14

When he saw the holiness of God in all of His splendor, Isaiah was brought to the reality of his sinfulness; his unworthiness.

When we study the Lord God we discover that He is Holy and we’re not holy, it doesn’t hurt us to know that.

He’s perfect and we are imperfect.
He’s strong and we are weak.
He’s patient and we’re impatient.
He’s impartial yet we’re prejudiced.
He’s in control and our lives are often out of control.

And when we realize this something happens that shows us our great need.

The result is marvelous. The Holy Spirit of God convicts us to see the truth and to want to change.

Believe me when I say this, because I know this God will pursue us if we let Him and He’ll show us where we need Him.

3) Knowing God enables us to see our world.

Keith Robinson, in The Encourager, writes:

“When God wanted to authenticate Himself to the ancient world, He called His nation Israel as witness.

'You are my witnesses,' He said, testimony that 'I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord' (Isa. 48:10).

The people of God served as the undeniable proof of God.

"God's people still offer the most basic and best proof of God.

A changed life is still the best testimony of God's power.

Divine love reflected in a Christian heart which accepts, forgives and loves the unlovable is still the best witness of the nature of God.

Hope that will not die is still the best proof of eternal life.

Faith which cannot be shaken even in the face of death is still the best demonstration of the immutability of God's promises.

"We who have been granted the imponderable privilege of partaking in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), are the witnesses, the demonstration, the proof of the divine presence in the world.

Books and lessons and sermons and reason may have their place, but the real test is in the lives of God's chosen people. If that proof is not clear and constant, everything else is just hearsay."

John MacArthur says that as a witness we are to simply tell the truth about Jesus.

When you and I get a hold of the knowledge of God and begin to see that He is in charge, you won't panic every time you read the paper or listen to the evening news.

God is in control! He sees the world that we live in and the most important thing we can do is to follow after Him.

4) Knowing God makes us stronger and more secure.

God isn't an old God is eternal.
God isn't intimidated; He is omnipotent.

Computers don't bother God; He's omniscient.

The threat of nuclear war doesn't have Him worried. He is sovereign.

So let me say it again, God is in control and He's got all together.

He can be a God you can trust to lead you all the way in your life.

He's never one time ever lost control.

I want you to understand the value of knowing God and seeing His purpose for your life.

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to give power and authority – that's our God.

I've saved the best for last. Why is it important to know Him?

5) Because knowing God introduces us to the eternal dimension of existence.

In John 17:3 Jesus said, ***“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ who You have sent.”***

Knowing God introduces you and me to the invisible world of God's kingdom.

When I know God I know Jesus for Jesus said, ***“If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.”***

When we become true followers of God, we see through eyes that aren't given to everyone.

Paul described it best when he said, ***“Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, no mind has***

conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” I Cor. 2:9

The only way any one receives this knowledge is through being born again.

It is given at the new birth.

That's why I keep preaching about the coming of Jesus should motivate us to be like Him.

Believing in Jesus, turning one's life over to Jesus, coming and opening up your heart and letting Jesus come in and be your Savior.

What we gain is an eternal dimension of life hereafter.

You see discipleship and being a genuine follower of Jesus really comes when we through true knowledge are changed and transformed in our lives.

It changes the way we live.

It brings us face to face with the truth of God and we respond.

Perhaps that best explains why God's prophets like Jeremiah and Daniel and others were always so intense and so unbending ... and still their message never fails to affect us even today.

Knowing God is life's major pursuit, but that's only half the story.

Loving God is our ultimate purpose in life.

And tell others about the Love of God completes it.