

"If You Know Me..."
John 14:1-14
Fifth S. of Easter
Messiah, Boerne
May 7, 2023

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Text: John 14:1-14

Dear Friends in Christ:

Members of a family generally do not ask one another if they know each other. Normally they believe—and with good reason—that they know each other quite well. Yet even in strong families the question sometimes comes up: "Don't you know me?" To use a phrase from the former Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, it's the "unknown unknowns" that surprise even the closest of families. Family life, after all, is a life-long process of members getting to know each other better, a process often full of surprises.

Jesus and his disciples were a family of sorts, a group of people with many of the same family dynamics. In our text, Jesus and his disciples are eating their final meal after spending the last three years together. Jesus had spent much time and effort in teaching His disciples all that they would need to know after He was gone. Still, Philip asked Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us," to which Jesus replied, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do

not know me, Philip?" (vv 8-9a). Even after spending around three years with Jesus, the apostles still had many unknown unknowns, still much to learn in order to know Jesus fully.

Now, whether you are a new Christian or you have been his disciple for many years, there is still much for you and me to learn. Sure, we may have gone through years of study as a junior confirmand and may have sat in many Adult Bible classes led by gifted pastors, but still the Holy Spirit reveals to us surprising truths—spiritual “unknown unknowns”—through the Holy Scriptures, and He will continue to do so until the day we die. The good news is that God has revealed to us all that is necessary for us to know in order to be sure of our eternal salvation. That revelation is given to us by God’s grace through Jesus Christ in his Word. Thus, by the Holy Spirit, we boldly confess that we know Jesus.

Still, there are times when our troubled hearts and minds may question what we believe as Christians, and at times we may ask ourselves, “Do I really know Jesus?” In that sense we are like the disciples in our text, troubled by our circumstances in life and unsure about our future. After all, like them, we are human beings, and we have a sinful nature just like our fallen first parents (Jn 3:6a). Although we’d like to think we are in control of our lives and understand what we are doing, Scripture describes the human predicament well: “I do not understand my

own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Rom 7:15). So, we question ourselves, "If I know him, why do I keep on acting contrary to his will?"

You see, our conduct, when measured by God's Law, agrees with our conscience and says, "No, you do not know him. If you did, then you would do his will." The Law of Moses, like a mirror, shows us our sins, confirming that the good we want to do, we do not do. Instead, we keep on doing the evil we do not want to do (Rom 7:19). It's kind of like a husband who knows and loves his wife dearly, but still does things that displease her.

And Christ agrees with both the Law and our conscience in saying, "No, you do not know me." Jesus says, "Apart from me, you can do nothing" (15:5), and that's exactly what happens apart from faith in Christ—*nothing* that pleases him. The writer to the Hebrews says it this way: "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11). According to the Holy Scriptures, we have no knowledge of God that is not tainted by sin (Is 64). In fact, all knowledge of God apart from Christ is only blindness, darkness, and death (9:41; Rom 6:32a).

Despite our sinful nature and sinful behavior, however, the Scriptures assure us that, yes, we *do* know him. This knowledge of Christ is not from within us but is a gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. God gives us this gift through his means of grace,

His Word and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. As Jesus told Nicodemus, "The Spirit gives birth to spirit" (3:6b), and through the Word and in Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart to believe in, to trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He gives sight to the blind, calls his sheep to follow him and leads them to green pastures, and sanctifies his disciples in the truth (9:25; 10:3b; 17:17). Now we see and believe, hear and follow, and are led by the Holy Spirit to know the truth.

Our knowledge of Jesus is based on his suffering and death on the cross for our salvation. By means of the cross, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, one with the Father (vv 9-11), took away your sins and my sins. Indeed, Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (1:29). When he said, "It is finished," and gave up his spirit, he became the way, the truth, and the life for you, for me, and for the whole world (v 6; 1 Jn 2:2).

Now, through his word spoken into your ears to your heart, through repentance and faith which returns you to the word and water of Holy Baptism, and through the eating and drinking of his body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, Christ works faith in him and his Father. These are God's means of grace, the ways in which God grants you the forgiveness of sins and promises you eternal life in heaven.

What else does Jesus give to us who know him? First of all, Jesus gives us *true* knowledge of God. He says, "Believe in God; believe also in me" (v 1). In other words, Jesus tells us that we are to trust in him the same way that we are to trust in God, thereby making himself equal to God, *because he is God!* John told us this in the very first verse of the first chapter of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1). Jesus is God incarnate—"in the flesh"—as John tells us in verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). We can trust Jesus to tell us the truth about God because, as John writes in verse 18, "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side," that is, Jesus, "he has made him known" (1:18).

Second, Jesus gives us the gift and promise of eternal life with him in his Father's house. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he was returning to his Father's house, his eternal dwelling place. When he says there are many rooms in his Father's house, he is talking about many dwelling places, places where his disciples will remain forever. In Revelation, John pictures the Father's house like a huge hotel with many rooms, and the dwelling places he promises are like the rooms, each looking out on the throne of the Lamb in the middle. Jesus promises to return and give to his believers such dwelling places, "that where I am you may be also" (v 3).

Third, Jesus gives us the ability and the will to work for him and with him. Jesus came into the world to proclaim the kingdom of God's grace so that many people might believe in him and have eternal life, as Jesus says, "And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (17:3). By the Holy Spirit, working through his word and Sacraments, Jesus gives us this saving truth, and by his word and Spirit he enables us to share this Good News with others, as Paul writes, "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). In this way we are able to do even greater works by telling other people about Jesus and making disciples of all people groups.

Dear Friends in Christ, by God's grace, we have come to know Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. This is not our work but the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, working in us the true faith and empowering us to tell others about Jesus so that they believe too. Then, the big surprise! When we get to heaven, and we finally know Jesus fully, even as we are fully known. Amen.