

# **ST. ANDREW'S - 25TH OCTOBER & 1ST NOVEMBER 2020**

## KNOWING JESUS (PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11)

### **Welcome and Announcements**

*"Welcome to this sermon transcript from St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Blackrock and Bray. I was off on annual leave last week, so I hope you didn't miss getting post from me too much! This copy is a combination of the last two Sundays and I pray it will give you some encouragement as you read it today" - Rev. Andrew Gill*

### **Scripture Sentence - Colossians 1:12 (NIV)**

*Give joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.*

### **Opening Prayer**

Almighty God,  
you have knit together your elect  
in one communion and fellowship  
in the mystical body of your Son.  
Give us grace to follow your blessed saints  
in all virtuous and godly living,  
that we may come to those inexpressible joys  
which you have prepared  
for those who perfectly love you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Reading - Philippians 3:1-11 (NIV)**

3 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch

out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

### **Sermon - 'Knowing the Value of Knowing Jesus'**

Sometimes in life the value of something can change dramatically very suddenly. You may remember that back in March, for a few days, because of the effect of the pandemic, the value of a roll of toilet paper was greater than the value of a barrel of oil!

In today's verses from Philippians 3:7-11 Paul is telling his personal testimony about how his values in life completely changed. Paul thought he had life all figured out, but then something happened and everything changed in an instant. As we look at his story and what he says to the church in Philippi, we need to check if we are placing the value on the right things.

Paul says in verse seven, *“Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss.”* I think he must have been doing his end-of-year accounts as he writes these verses because he's using an illustration from the world of accountancy. In financial accounts you have a column for credit and a column for debit. At the end you add them both up to see if you've got a profit or to see if you've got a loss. Paul is saying that everything that was in the credit column, what he thought was giving him profit of life, he's moved over to the debit column and he's counted it as a loss! Paul's life has changed and in the couple of verses beforehand he describes his old way of life; *“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.”* (vv.5-6)

Paul was from the right sort of family and had a good upbringing. He worked hard and had risen to be of the elite. He was a respected leader in his day. Paul was a good moral person. Paul thought he had everything all sorted in his life. He had a confidence in who he was and what he had achieved. He knew that other people were impressed by him, and he believed that God was impressed with him too. He mistakenly thought he would be counted as righteous because he had kept the law.

All those things were on the profit side of Paul's life ledger, but then something happened to change his mind completely. Now he adds them up and all those things come to a loss for him. Why? What happened to Paul that he had such a turn around? *Paul had an encounter with the living risen Lord Jesus.*

The book of Acts tells us this story about how the Apostle Paul, as a persecutor of the church, was on his way to a place called Damascus. While he was there on the road he saw this bright blinding light and then heard this voice from heaven say to him, ‘Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting me?’ Paul said, ‘Who are you lord?’ and the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’ In that moment Paul realised that he had made a mistake, that he had made an error about who Jesus was and what was the right way to live before God.

After that encounter everything changed for Paul. He no longer lived his life for himself, now he lived his life for Jesus. Look at what he says in 3:8, *“What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.”* When Paul talks about the knowledge of Christ, he's not just talking about a head knowledge, he's talking about a heart knowledge. For Paul, the value of knowing Christ and experiencing his power and his love surpasses everything else. All of his past achievements and accomplishments, as great as they were, come to nothing when compared to the saving knowledge of Christ.

A few weeks ago I heard a story about a man in Luxembourg who had been told that old copies of a certain book could be worth a lot of money. He brought it to auction and it was sold for €65,000! For 20 years it sat on a shelf, It was the most valuable thing he owned but he didn't realise it. When I hear stories like that, I always wonder if I have something of great worth that I don't realise. Maybe you're the same? Can I suggest that if you're a Christian reading this, then maybe you do. Maybe you have Jesus in your life but you do not realise the surpassing value that knowing him is worth. Knowing Jesus is better than riches, fame, success, and all the prizes you could ever win.

Paul continues, *“I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.”* (vv. 8&9) Righteousness is a word that describe our right standing with God. It means being in the 'sinless' column rather than the 'sinner' column. The Bible tells us that through our own efforts we can never be good enough to be seen as righteous. The truth is that by ourselves when God adds up our thoughts, words, and deeds we deserve to be counted as sinners. The only person who ever lived a perfect and sinless life was Jesus. He alone stood before God as being righteous, but on the cross a change happened. Through his death he became sin for us. He put himself into the sinners column so that we could be moved by grace in to the righteous column before God!

Paul realised that he had got it all wrong. He had been working his whole life building up a righteousness for himself based on following the law. Now he sees it as worthless, because he could never be good enough to make himself righteous before God. But now he knows the wonderful truth that by faith through what Christ has done he was made the very righteousness of God.

It would be like spending your life savings to buy a painting by a famous artist. You save for years and years and then finally buy it and display it proudly in your house. But then you discover it is a forgery and is absolutely worthless. You are devastated, until the artist herself comes to you and gives you a gift of a genuine priceless masterpiece for you to hang in your house instead. That is what Christ did for Paul, and it's what Christ can do for you. Through faith we can receive the gift of true righteousness.

Paul's life had been changed by Jesus and the goal for his future was to know Christ even more, and he was willing to give up all else to attain it. *"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."* (vv.10-11)

Resurrection power means that the gains we have from knowing Jesus will always increase. His love is eternal and his goodness is infinite. Every day of your life you can know Jesus more. You could be a Christian for 80, 90, even 120 years and still gain more joy and give more praise than the day before! But that is just the start. When we experience the full power of the resurrection and our dead bodies are raised from the grave, and we enter into eternal life we will know Christ in ways that we can only imagine right now. And still our joy will increase every day. Christ is of such infinite value that not even eternity will give us enough time to worship him as he truly deserves.

Perhaps you are reading this and you're trying to live life like Paul used to do. You are putting your confidence in yourself, and in who you are and what you've done. But learn Paul's lesson; *you're counting things up wrong.*

Self-righteousness is no righteousness at all, it's a worthless forgery. Knowing Jesus is the only thing of any value in this world, and it is of supreme value.

The Lord Jesus himself put it like this, 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'

Knowing Jesus is the best thing. It is the best thing for your life right now and it is the only thing for your eternity. You can know him today, and you can know him better tomorrow.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus,

I want to know you.

I am sorry that I have placed a higher value on lesser things,  
and put my confidence in what cannot save.

Forgive me. Take away my sin and give me you,  
so that being found in you

I can have the righteousness that comes from God through faith.

Holy Spirit, show me the infinite value of knowing Christ.

Send me your resurrection power,

so that I may gain;

joy, peace, love, and hope.

Help me to know Jesus more everyday,

until he returns again,

and I see him face to face,

and join with all creation

to give him all the praise and glory

he is worthy to receive.

Amen.