

## The New Horizon

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John 1:40-51

John 2:23-25

God made this world, this physical universe. He created it out of nothing. He brought it into being by divine fiat. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" is the basic premise of revealed truth. It is the absolute corollary of the existence of a Holy God.

Logically it follows that God knows all about this world. Any knowledge that we have of it is limited, limited to the permissive revelation of God. God's knowledge is limitless. Space has no mysteries for Him. The natural laws which hold the world together are His laws. The unexplored reaches of space are of His design. The stars in their uncounted glory are His abundance.

The immeasurable and unbelievable powers for destruction or good that are present in this physical universe are all known of God and subject to His sovereignty. We have broken into the secret powerhouse of matter, perhaps irreverently, and released forces beyond the power of man to control. We are afraid but God, who knows infinitely more, is unafraid. We are afraid because we have seen man by the light of an atomic flash. Yet we know almost nothing of this man.

The world has come at last to a critical dilemma. We know enough to be afraid. The knowledge that we have has become our unbearable burden. Knowledge is like that.

The doctor makes a diagnosis. His knowledge becomes a burden. The scientist draws back in horror from his microscope. The weatherman sees the approaching destruction. Knowledge is a tremendous responsibility.

There is a greater knowledge, however. That is what our text says, "Jesus knew what was in man". The crown of God's creation was the making of man. He made him of the dust of the earth, unlike all the rest of creation. He was to subdue the earth and in that pursuit he has become afraid.

A few weeks ago I heard a scientist in my city bewilder us with a discussion of space travel. He spoke from an unusual vantage point. A year before, speaking to this same group of men, he had prophesied rockets in outer space. There was about him then the aura of a prophet.

After dazzling us with the immensity of space, the possibility of man travelling in it at 90% of the speed of light, he came to this startling conclusion. "Our greatest challenge is in the realm of human behaviour. We have made no progress it seems since the days when Jesus was here in the flesh".

Jesus knew what was in man because He had created him. Our new horizon is this knowledge which can only come to us by the reverent inquiry of faith in Jesus.

The adventure into this world could produce the knowledge that would quiet our present fears and change our world.

In the setting of our text Nathanael is brought to Jesus by Philip. When Jesus proves His omniscience by His previous knowledge of this man's whereabouts, Nathanael declares "thou art the Son of God". In answer, Jesus pointed out that Nathanael had been convinced by a lesser knowledge.

Then there follows the account of certain miracles and the multitudes that followed after Jesus convinced by these demonstrations of divine power. They were not true disciples, we are told. Jesus, "knowing that which was in man", refused to commit Himself unto them though He had gladly committed Himself unto His disciples. This is the greatest knowledge, a knowledge given only to God, the knowledge which we need most desperately to seek from Him, the knowledge of the heart of a man. Surely this must be the basic explanation of redemption "Jesus knew what was in man".

Jesus knew the need that was in man and this brought Him from Heaven's glory to seek and to save man. This is the only reasonable, human, explanation of the sublime statement of the incarnation. There is no way for us to fully measure the dimensions of the scripture "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us".

This is a statement of divine stooping, a picture of unbelievable condescension. The majesty that belonged to Jesus in the godhead, the place of sovereign power, the mysterious fellowship with the Father, were laid aside in the search for man. Such a condescension had to be the response of God to a need which was in the heart of man, known only to God.

Jesus, the Son, knew man before he became the creature in need because He created him. He knew his God-like quality, that he

was made in the image and likeness of God. He was created the great unlike in all of God's creation. To him alone had been given the qualities, the moral qualities of a human soul. Jesus knew his divine potential for he was to be given the sovereignty of a world made for him. Man was to walk in fellowship with God. There was to be the sweetness of reciprocal love. There was no mechanical relationship, man was not a puppet in the hands of God.

How far then man has fallen! See him cowering in fear in the garden in the knowledge of his sin and his nakedness as God says "Adam, where art thou"? He is certainly far from that which God intended. We know enough about ourselves to know his guilt. We have never fully determined the length of his fall.

This knowledge of Jesus included an understanding that all men are sinners. The very universality of human need can cause it to be complacently disregarded. Jesus said "they that are whole have no need of a physician" and the men to whom He spoke quickly assumed that they were without need. This is not true for all men are sinners.

Jesus knew that every man individually is a rebel against God. We are by nature children of wrath. The basic urge of our sinful nature is to throw aside every restraint and disregard every warning of God. This lies at the opposite extreme of that which God intended us to be.

In the degree that we can never know it, Jesus knew the desperate wickedness of the human heart. Jeremiah had cried, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

The sum of such knowledge was and is that the basic and ultimate needs of this hour are spiritual rather than economic or social or physical. A group of four men brought a palsied man to Jesus. Jesus looking upon his distress said, "thy sins be forgiven thee". He came at once to this man's greatest need. A world would have applauded a cure for palsy but few there were to acclaim the greater miracle, an answer for man's sin.

If our generation should discover this new world of need, discover that our crisis is spiritual, it would be more startling than the discovery of atomic power. Very little of our present strivings for world peace is determined by this axiom.

A lack of this knowledge has watered down our gospel strategy. The failure to know what was in man, as regards his basic needs, has prevented us from ministering to those needs. We have been putting on poultices when the world needs a blood transfusion. We have been wrapping up sore fingers when the heart of man is desperately sick.

A second consideration is that Jesus knew what was in man and therefore knew him to be worth saving. We say, correctly, that salvation is by grace. "It is not of works lest any man should boast". There is no merit by which a man may claim salvation.

In our emphasis on man's lack of merit in salvation we may have missed his basic worth. Certain it is that the dignity of man and human worth have reached an all time low in our generation. Unfit, undeserving, unmeriting, we undoubtedly are, but there is something in man which, in the eyes of Jesus, was worth the price of his redemption.

The chief charge levelled against Jesus in the days of His flesh was that He mingled with sinners. His reply was that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. In the 8th chapter of John there is the story of a woman taken in adultery about to be stoned by her accusers. Jesus comes to her defense saying "let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone". As He stands there defending the woman, presently to say to her go and sin no more, His is a startling divine affirmation that she was worth saving.

The repentant thief on the cross is assured "today thou shalt be with me in paradise". It would seem that Jesus was too busy dying to bother with a guilty thief. More to the point, it would seem that a man like this is not worth any consideration. Jesus indicates that he is worth saving, even worth dying in order that He might save him, even worth stopping the processes of death that He might assure him of his salvation.

Calvary, the cross of Jesus, establishes the par value of man. We know that the cross presents the sinner's substitute. There is no theory of the atonement that should be satisfactory to the believer that does not make Jesus our substitute. "Jesus tasted death for every man", we are told. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all", the prophet said. Sure it is that He bore our sins on the tree.

The cross is also the unique example of divine achievement. This is the way to win, the pattern of personal triumph. Jesus had said it before, "he that saveth his life shall lose it. He that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it". He achieves most who gives the most.

The cross becomes the measuring stick of the love of God. It is only at the cross that we understand what it means to say "God so loved the world". To consider the cross is to break the heart of any sinner. It was as the commander of the executing squad regarded the crucified Jesus that he said "truly this is the Son of God". There is no greater theme than the love of God.

But it begins to dawn upon us that there is something here that we may have missed. Having said these other things we have not said it all. God knows something that we do not know.

He knew what was in man but He went right ahead and died for him. He knew what was in man and He continued to rescue him. He knew that which was in man and gave Himself for him. Man is worth more than any other man has ever dared to believe.

What if this new horizon of knowledge should be opened to us? What if we began to make reverent inquiry into the worth of a man? If we discover the answer that lies basic in the cross, the result would be to make war impossible.

Jesus knew what was in redeemed man when He set up New Testament churches for him. The church is God's idea. There are those in the world who treat it as though it were the idea of the clergy. They would make it another lodge or club or some such. The Book says that Jesus established the church and the churches. The wisdom of God is in that establishment. Undoubtedly the knowledge of God of the heart of this new creation in Christ Jesus dictated the establishment of these churches.

How important then this makes these churches to twentieth century disciples. They become the first choices of our new life. They become the open demonstration of our discipleship and the unflinching courage of our testimony. This rebukes every careless church member, every so called "out of city" Baptist.

According to our New Testament this church is a fellowship of the saved, a regenerated church membership. This is a Christian community that is to be a foretaste in kind of the heavenly community. People saved want to live with other people who are saved. In Christian experience there is a fellowship which must find its instant expression. Jesus knew that because He made His disciples so.

These New Testament churches are to become the channels for effective Christian service and faithful Christian witnessing. No Christian life is said to be maximum outside these communities of faith. They do not create faith but they project faith in terms of Christian testimony. We need to realize the exclusive quality of these New Testament churches. We have given lip service to the idea of divine determination in their establishment. We have given very little thought, however, to the reason that lies in their establishment, the knowledge in the mind of God that dictated their need. He knew that He had made us for just such expression and fellowship.

This knowledge was the basis of God's strategy in the march of the gospel. It remains so to this very hour. I have heard our Foreign Mission Secretary, Dr. Cauthen, say "the strategy of the Foreign Mission Board is to establish New Testament churches in the fields which we enter." Why, of course, this has always been the strategy of God in the preaching of the gospel and the spread of His kingdom. In the darkness that is in the world we are to establish the lights of a New Testament church witness, community by community. The knowledge that was in Jesus of the need that was in fallen man and the answer that was in redeemed man dictated this strategy.

One of the most glorious truths that was in our enterprise, the one which this convention represents, is that Jesus knew what was in redeemed men and therefore made to them God's supreme commitment. "Go ye therefore and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, and I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen", Jesus said.

For sheer drama, the Great Commission will stand alongside Creation and Calvary. Deity commits His chief desire to humanity in our text. In John's gospel we are told that Jesus would not commit Himself unto certain men convinced by His miracles. In the commission to His disciples, which we call the Great Commission, He yields Himself with confidence into their hands.

There is the temptation here to say in our finiteness that Jesus has overreached Himself. Love seems to have been carried away by love. The task that He gives us is too large, the world that He loves is too important, to commit it to our inadequate hands.

It is tremendously important that we understand that this is not blind love that speaks but this is the movement of divine knowledge.

He knew the "power of the gospel". He is to cause Paul to say "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth". How true! How true! Wherever the gospel has been preached in this earth strange things have come to pass. At Pentecost a great cosmopolitan crowd begins to cry aloud with knowledge of sin and of need and to ask "what shall we do"? The Holy Spirit is to honor the witness of men to the accomplishment of the victories of grace.

He knew the potential of individual dedication. Paul said "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". Someone would dare to ask "why not get out of jail then"? His answer must surely have been that, "I can stay in jail for the glory of my Saviour."

Jesus said to Peter "thou art Peter" (a rock). Only God could have known that. Take up the story at that point and soon you will find Peter opposing himself to the Lord's statement that He would die for us. It was wicked presumption indeed when he said "Not so, Lord". No wonder Jesus said to him "get thee behind me, Satan. Thou savorest not the things that be of God but the

things that be of man". Did Jesus miss His forecast on this man? No, wait. Read the record again and find there the story of Peter's denial of Jesus. It was a prophesied denial. True.

He comes at last to swear and to curse and declare that he never knew Him. Then he plunges out into the night in the despair of his failure. A noble experiment has failed, you say? No, wait.

"Peter, do you love me?"

"Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love thee."

"Feed my sheep."

Then is it any wonder that Peter becomes the preacher at Pentecost? Isn't it easy to believe that tradition, that when he came to his martyrdom he requested that he be crucified head downward for he was unworthy to be crucified like his lord. To such a man and to such men, saved men like us, Jesus can with confidence commit the things of His kingdom.

It was said that "the world has yet to see what God can do with a life surrendered to his will". That may be true in its ultimate meaning but the world has seen a bit of what God can do through yielded, regenerated, surrendered lives.

Jesus knew the faithfulness of His witnesses. Who could have known but God that men and women would take this message of life and atonement and go out and share it with their world? Who but Jesus would have known that men and women would have been willing to die, to suffer unspeakable torture, to accept indescribable indignities, in order that they might be faithful to Him?

We have enough history to indicate that His confidence was not misplaced. The knowledge that moved Him to make such commitment was accurate. The wonderful thing that it means to us is that in His commitment to us He has the confidence that we will be faithful and that through us His victories of love will be achieved.

Wicked men sneer at gospel strategy and discount the effectiveness of Christians. If they should come to know in our twentieth century just a little of that which is in redeemed men they would be afraid. Pilate had his glimpse and was never the same again. Herod had his glimpse and he died a man in fear. Jesus knew, and we ought to know, that redeemed men can be trusted in their witness to a lost world.

Finally, Jesus knew what was in redeemed man and restored to him the forfeited fellowship with God, and promised him the ultimate victory. What do the promises of God mean to you? What does it do for you to sing "Standing on the Promises of God"? Remember that those promises were made to hearts that had no secrets from God.

Jesus promised His disciples that they should have victory over death and the grave. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death". "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Death is the great leveller of life, it is the least common denominator of all humanity. It is the dread enemy that knows hovel and mansion alike, that respects not throne nor power. The promise of Jesus is that His disciple is the conqueror of death.

It has not been long since the world paused respectfully in the presence of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. The greater part of the world did not believe but we believe. We know that Jesus knows the eternal life that is in us. It is with that knowledge that He has promised us that the grave is not the end. Without a tremble in our hearts we can say "Oh death where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory."

Knowing what was in man Jesus promised him fellowship with Him forever. "Where I am there ye may be also", He said. Peter spoke of a "new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness". We are in truth "Marching To Zion."

The truth of heaven is presented by Jesus not as a present promise or a future fact. It is presented as a present fact. As He looks into our hearts He knows us to be His disciples, His redeemed children for He has redeemed us, His newborn men, and we are now citizens of heaven. It is a statement of a present condition that has its future significance.

Knowing His redeemed, He tells us that we are to share with Him the ultimate triumph of His kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ". Paul said "if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him". How different the Bible becomes with this statement of the supreme knowledge of Jesus. How hopeful our enterprise and how immediate is our fellowship.

Jesus knew what was in man but it deterred Him not at all. He left heaven's glory, he became man among men, "the word made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Knowing what was in man He walked steadily towards the cross. Nothing could turn Him aside. He overcame Satan on the Mount of Temptation, submitted Himself to the Father in Gethsemane, accepted the weight of our sins and died on the cross of Calvary.

Knowing what was in man He walked out of the grave to declare His total victory. He spent forty days among His disciples and committed to them the responsibility of a lost world. With confidence He went back to the Father to His place of intercession at the Father's right hand.

This is the knowledge that we ought to seek. Here our ignorance hurts us the most. God forbid that we should continue to be absorbed with our lesser search. Let us seek to discover this new creation in Christ Jesus this new creature. This knowledge is tomorrow's Horizon of Hope.