

"Jesus, if you, you Know"
1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14
Rev. Rebecca Simpson
May 7th, 2023

Let's pray!

Gracious God be with us now an hour hearing and understanding of your scriptures help us to apply them in our lives today by the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen!

I've heard it said in social media circles if you know you know. This statement usually follows a picture or a meme of some sort of inside joke meant for a select group. No context is given so that the insiders get it and the outsiders, well! they just don't.

I'll try to give you an example. Imagine if you don't know what a meme is? It's sort of just a picture. So imagine, this as a picture circulating on the Internet and the caption says, So wild morning of worship at Richmond Presbyterian. If you know you know the Holy Spirit was really move in at Richmond Presbyterian like not like woo praise the Lord, but like, right! Do you get it? Do you know?

Presbyterians! Obviously the context is that we're pretty calm we tend to be quiet and introverted we tend to be less outwardly expressive during worship, right! But as soon as you start to explain it you kind of take the whole power and insiderness of it away. So anyway, I hope you understand this idea of 'if you know you know'.

John's whole gospel is based on an, if you know, you know kind of principle. There are definite insiders who get it ears to hear and eyes to see this has nothing to do with actual physical deafness or blindness it's also a softened heart or not stiff neck. These physical things are metaphorical for our attitudes toward God for our openness for our willingness to receive grace and mercy and to admit and live humbly in need of that grace and mercy.

If the people walk through the gospel of John have insight and have wisdom have true wisdom they will have understanding that Jesus is the Christ even when his identity goes unexplained so often. It seems to be a spontaneous kind of knowing that just wells up in some people and not in others. It's not really explained in the gospel of John how people know, or why they know? They just do what is so interesting about the insiders who get it the ones who recognize Father God in Jesus, these insiders catch on that Jesus is the Messiah but you know what? They are not the people who should know they are originally actually the outsiders.

The people on the fringes of society they are the foreigners the women the children the criminals the people with disabilities the people who are seen somehow in society as less than. Not the people of high status or the people of good education. Those are the ones who should know and they don't their status somehow gets in the way of their understanding of the significance of Jesus Christ. There's something too big for them to give up, they don't want to know. What I find most interesting about the gospel of John is this interplay between the 'if you know you know' attitude, amidst the radical invitation for everyone to come and to know that Jesus is the Christ for you and for me.

The inside joke, the insider information it is a full display of every it is in full display in everything that Jesus says and does in the gospel of John. He is not actually hiding his identity as Son of God. Don't get this mixed up if you have a little bit of knowledge of Gnosticism the idea that there are secret knowledge that you must know to be saved this is not Gnosticism. Jesus is fully present as the son of God he is in fact bold in drawing attention from those who seek to destroy him because, he is doing signs and miracles he is for giving people an baptizing people and proclaiming the salvation of God.

And yet, there's people who don't know. I personally am drawn to the paradoxes and contradictions that I find in scripture. It tells me this isn't just a story that some people wrote, because when people write stories they either end really dissatisfying, ever watched a whole movie hoping something would happen and you got to the engineer like I wasted two hours on that!

Yeah! people write stories like that or they write stories like masterful novels where every little piece connects up and has some great reason by the end. I think of like Oliver Twist and what's that author marked not Mark Twain I was

getting mixed up Charles Dickens. They are not alike but I get them mixed up Charles Dickens writes his novels where there's many, many, many, many characters and all these things going on and they keep in start out kind of boring but by the end it's all come together. You think wow! people write that stories where all the loose ends are tide people don't write stories with complexities and incongruencies and mysteries that still come out satisfying but not with all the answers tide up.

That's how God writes our stories so I find these paradoxes really faith building actually the complexity and the contrast that comes from an insider group who practices a wide welcome. It's not how we think, It must be from God and you know what? It's beautiful!

Expressed winsomely without too much effort to erase the mystery our shared Christian faith could be captivating to more people than we realize so let's look at the scripture readings for today with this lens in mind 'if you know you know'.

First we see Jesus reassuring his disciples in the gospel of John. Do not let your hearts be troubled he says believe in God believe also in me. If we've been to many Christian funeral or memorial services we may believe that this passage where Jesus goes on to speak of his father's house having many mansions, we think of heaven. Rightly so, we think of this as a place far away where we will go someday and we will rest in riches in comfort, each of us in our own mansion and so as depending on what your cultural background you'll find that quite comforting some of us have grown up thinking that like the smaller family unit is how we should live and sharing a home with others is kind of intimidating. Others of you know the truth that living together is quite rich and wonderful.

But anyways, regardless of your sense of who all will be in that mention with you you'll be in a neighborhood right you're going to be in God's neighborhood and you'll be able to have like block parties and barbecues and be really happy and hang out forever in heaven, right! Something like that. I'm not here to tell you that's wrong but I think there's more to it Jesus is giving this encouragement speech to his disciples not just white knuckle it until you finally die and go to heaven I don't think that's a very enticing way to live this life there's a lot between now and then.

He's giving this encouragement speech to them while they are alive they've got a lot more life to live. And this encouragement speech is here for us as the church for the lot more living of life that we have together until whatever that end is. The comfort of knowing that the disciples have a place in the Kingdom is not only for them to look forward to in death, but it is for them to take strength from to live from, for today.

We have to figure out how to do that what is how does that how does that fuel our life for today we all need comfort from time to time and sometimes much more than other times. And Jesus is preparing his disciples in this moment in the gospel for an intense, acute moment of pain.

He's giving this reassurance speech on the eve of his crucifixion. And so we are right to have death connotations attached to Jesus words of assurance I think the mistake is in relegating the concept of dwelling in Christ to the end of our earthly existence. Because Jesus wants us to know that we dwell in Him, now. And He in us, and always.

Jesus speaks of going to his father's house Christ death is not a final destination though. With his resurrection life continues. Heaven is not a place for Jesus to go to a final rest but rather a position in this world of glory. He ascends to the throne but the throne is here among us. And He does this to further indicate his divine status and power, something we can be confident in. The father's house will not be a vacation home for Jesus a pleasant visit, rather it's a place of action and life.

Perhaps you've seen some television series like 'Downton Abbey' and you see the hustle and bustle of that home, off course drama and intrigue. But a lot of business a lot of a lot of new relationships and ways of getting along with the neighbours and community building, conversations happen in that house. There's another show like that also set in in England. It's on Netflix right now it's called the 'Diplomat'.

Is anybody been watching that one? They have these like intense you know should we go to war against this country and all the intrigue of nations bombing other nations and it's all happening in these beautiful British countryside states. I think like these this is my father's house. It's a, it's a beautiful a state where really

important things are happening. Decisions are being made the world is being formed in this place.

It's not an all-inclusive in Mexico. And Jesus is there ahead of us preparing rooms for us to stay with him like the servant leadership that he showed when he washed his disciples feet, he's in changing the sheets. So you have a nice place to come and stay.

It's not a place with many mansions actually that's one English translation, but rather it's a place of deep abiding connection and relationship. The Greek word for many dwelling places or rooms is the noun that corresponds with the verb 'to abide' or 'to dwell'. In the next chapter of the gospel of John Jesus will speak of being the vine and he'll tell us that we are the branches and how if we abide in him if we dwell in him if we stay connected to him he will abide in us he will dwell in us and we will have abundant life, enjoy today.

Jesus provides us with many places of abiding connection. The Father in Jesus and Jesus in us Jesus establishes a permanent relationship and an unfading fellowship with God on our behalf even beyond death. And this relationship for us as a community and as individuals is God's ultimate goal in sending us God's son. 'If you know you know' why Jesus came? to make that connection.

And Thomas, dear Thomas it's going to be a lot of inside jokes back in the day among the disciples about Thomas. He says, 'Lord we do not know where you are going how can we know the way?' Imagine him thinking tonight can I just put a little GPS tracker on the bottom of Jesus' robe so I can keep track of where he's headed. Any of you have Snap-chat with your children so you can check on where they're at. Anyway! That's if you that's coming this one lady here with it with the baby.

I mean this is a good joke since if anyone is going to know this insider information of where is Jesus going? The way to being with Jesus it ought to be the disciples. They are the people who should know by now. But of course the gospel is always going to illustrate God's grace in reaching out to us even in our unknowing. Jesus says silly Thomas, you already know. You know the way to the father's house and he points to himself. This is, 'I am the way' 'I am the way'.

If you know me then you know your way to the father's house because if you know me you recognize truth. If you know me says Jesus, you will have life if you know me says Jesus you know the way to live now. The way, capital letters 'THE WAY' is a perfect expression of, 'if you know you know'.

Having been exposed to the words and actions of Jesus the Christ the disciples are perfectly educated for living in the way of Jesus. Now, the way, capital 'THE WAY' is a rich metaphor for our Christian life together we are together now on the way. The way it could be a highway or a road bringing to my navigation maps directions. It's a path towards something. The way is a code of conduct a way of behaving and being in the world. The way is a teaching a school of thought and action, it's the wisdom of the world alive in our intentions alive in our community. We know the way, we watch Jesus and we follow him.

The early Christ following movement was often called 'followers of the way'. To be called Christians meant being 'Christ like one's'. Christ like people who imitate their leader Jesus Christ followers walk in the way of Jesus. Jesus teaches us how to imitate him throughout the gospel of John. In his words and his actions his radical hospitality his bold claims of divinity at work in and through an all around him. His courage in the face of unjust powers, his welcome to the strangers, his death defying deeds of mercy and grace. All of these teach us the way. Throughout the gospel of John Jesus meets a variety of people. Some of them know almost instantly 'He's the Messiah'. And others refused to know. Status and power often get in the way of knowing. So if you have any ounce of status any bit of power, beware you're at risk of unknowing. Vulnerable people often have a special capacity to know the truth about Jesus. No matter where we line up on the scales though of insider, outsider, powerful, downtrodden, rich, poor. We are all invited to know Jesus. He says, if you know me you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and you have seen him go and be and do accordingly. 'You know'.

God of mercy help us in our unknowing, spirits on in our knowing. Amen!