

True Knowledge of God

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[0 : 0 0] The Bible reading this evening is taken from Matthew chapter 11, verses 25 to 30. You can find it in the Bibles in front of you on page 977. At that time, Jesus said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to the little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you are pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Amen. Brilliant. Brilliant.

Let me add my welcome to Alan's. If I haven't met you before, my name is Simon. I'm a trainee minister here at St. Silas. Let's pray as we dig into God's word together this evening.

[1 : 2 8] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Do you want to know God?

I imagine if you're here this evening, there's a very high chance you want to answer yes to that question. maybe you're a christian and you know god already but you're here and want to deepen your faith by hearing more from his word maybe you're here and you're not someone who would call yourself a christian but you think there must be something spiritually real and you're here to find out if this is what it could be whoever we are a desire to know god is something at the core of all of us and it leads to that big question how how do i know god that's a question that jesus answers very directly in our passage this evening in matthew we are jumping ahead a little bit in matthew for those who've been with us through the series just to look at this core passage in the middle of the next couple of chapters that helps us make sense of all the parts around it in this series matthews that we've been in we've seen who jesus is that he is the king of his people come to bring the kingdom to the world and we've seen what kind of king he will be that he is a gentle and gracious king who restores people's lives but as jesus has gone out and over the chapters that we've read we've seen more and more resistance more and more pushback to jesus and his ministry he goes out healing but people walk away he goes out speaking the truth about god but people become hostile in the passage leading up to the one that nicola read for us you would see jesus pronouncing judgment on the towns that he's just passed through for having rejected him refusing to repent of their sins and come to him so in terms of people coming to know god it might seem a little bleak at this point in our story wherever jesus goes he's being rejected more and more and the leaders of the people of israel the people who should see jesus most clearly as god are actually being most hostile so the question i think you get to at this point in this gospel is is anyone going to know god well according to what jesus says in tonight's passage the answer thankfully is yes but what he says is that coming to know god is only available through him if you want to know god says jesus come to me so we're going to look at three different aspects about true knowledge of god this evening you can find them in the white sheet that you received on the way in and they're all under the title of true knowledge of god so our first point true knowledge of god is hidden from the wise but revealed to little children verses 25 and 26 matthew records jesus prayer of praise to the father god addressing him as the one who rules over everything a reminder to the crowd and therefore also to matthew's readers of who jesus is that he is the son of god himself that he can address god as father but his reasons for praise of god are something that we might find very confronting read of me i praise you father lord of heaven and earth because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children yes father this is what you are pleased to do

okay so let's let's break that down a little bit first what are these things that jesus is talking about in these verses well i take in that given how much of matthew's gospel has been taken up with jesus teaching about the kingdom and jesus demonstrations of his miraculous power of the kingdom breaking in that these things are to do with his kingdom how jesus will come to be the answer to bible's the bible's big question of how can people be in god's kingdom how can they come back to a holy god even though they have sinned against him

and the clear answer jesus has been giving is that it is only through him but this answer according to jesus has been hidden from the wise and revealed to little children the question is well who are the wise in jesus day you've got a couple of options jesus could mean the towns and villages that have just rejected him but the people that would have been thought of as wise in jesus day are likely to be the religious teachers of israel the ones who we have been seeing are openly hostile to his message the truth about the kingdom is hidden from these people because they have rejected jesus and yet the most humble and the most insignificant people of jesus day small children well the kingdom of god and the truth about that is revealed to them because they are in fact coming to jesus if you were to read all the way to the start of chapter 18 you would literally see jesus welcoming children into his arms and in this we see quite a confronting truth who is in control of knowledge of god well god is he is pleased to be the one in control of that knowledge it is he who conceals and reveals and he does it in a way that completely flips the world's values on their head there are a lot of people in our world today who believe that they can tell you the truth about god they act as if they are the ones with privileged access with a special relationship and if you want to know god well you have to go to them they will give you what you really need their method their wisdom but the big problem is jesus outright tells you that human wisdom has no path to god you just can't get to him through human wisdom a phd in theology can teach you an awful lot of information about god you may even know an awful lot of information about jesus himself but it will not give you a relationship with god because knowing god isn't just assenting to facts about him or knowing information about him it's about relating to him on his terms the world's wisdom could just never get you anywhere near him the problem for us is that we think of god as less than he is maybe as some sort of concept or some sort of force something that we can discover on our own terms by our own effort but the one who's actually in control of knowledge of god is god himself outside of him revealing himself to us we can't know him at all but jesus goes a step even further and we see this in verse 27 our second point true knowledge of god only comes from jesus the right question to ask at this point then is if the wisest people in the world can't tell me how to go how to get to god why should jesus be any better why is this one man's claim to exclusive access better than everyone else's well i think the next words in matthew's gospel record that for us jesus reminds his listeners of how important his own relationship with the father is see in verse 27 all things have been committed to me by my father no one knows the son except the father and no one knows the father except the son god the father has given his son jesus everything all things jesus has been delegated rule over the whole universe by the father out of love therefore he has power over all the people in this world as their true king nobody has that relationship with the father god that jesus the son has

not mutual knowing of one another again isn't just assenting to some intellectual facts about one another it is to relate to know on a relational level when we say we know a friend or a family member we don't just mean we know facts about them we mean we know them we relate to them and jesus is then saying that the only one who really knows god is him because he is god the god of christianity has simply never been alone he reveals himself to us as father son and spirit one god three persons relating forever the spirit isn't absent in this relationship he's just not mentioned in this passage here but jesus is making an exclusive claim to true knowledge of god and outside of him god is therefore unknowable and this flies right in the face of our modern age of pluralism and theoretical tolerance there aren't many many paths up a mountain all of which are leading to god at the top there is just one way jesus and nothing else there's no space to believe that all religions just have a bit of the truth and we can piece them together jesus here claims absolute and exclusive rights to knowledge of god and outside of him nobody knows god and only jesus can make these claims because of who he is the son of god himself now let me say if jesus had just stopped there this could all seem incredibly bleak couldn't it access to god is prohibited it's jesus alone and well where are we well we keep reading in verse 27 no one knows the father except the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him if jesus chooses to reveal the father to someone then they can know god too thus all children from verse 25 are the ones that jesus chooses to show the way

to the father it's just all about jesus he's the one with access therefore he is the one who can grant that access to other people and so if true knowledge of god is found in jesus alone our last question then is who is jesus going to reveal the father to is anyone going to come and know this god who is going to accept this invitation and so we move on to our final point this evening true knowledge of god brings rest to weary souls come to me all you who are weary and burdened and i will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me for i am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls those are some of the most well-known and well-quoted verses in the whole bible they have been a comfort to many people in many situations and they're words that resonate deeply with so many people to find rest for your soul we live in such a restless age everything is fast-paced a bomb goes off halfway around the world and a video of it appears in our hands 30 seconds later peace and rest are far from us we know that something's going wrong we know that people are more stressed it seems out than they've ever been that people are burdened and weary and don't we feel that's a good description of how we so often feel burdened and weary by life true rest and peace just seems to evade us but jesus here claims to be the rest giver that we can all come to but again let's stop and just think what does jesus mean by all who are weary and burdened he isn't inviting people who need a nap to come to him

so what does he actually mean well back in chapter 9 we saw how jesus regarded the crowds he's ministering to if you flick back one page or so with me and go to chapter 9 verse 36 we see the love of which jesus sees these people 9 36 says when he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd harassed and helpless weary and burdened sheep without a shepherd people without god in calling the crowds to come to him for rest jesus is inviting people back to the god who made them to relate to him for true rest is found in true knowledge of god and this applies to everyone jesus met to everyone who read this gospel and to all of us here today quite simply we are not made to live out a relationship with the god who made us but in jesus day there was another factor that kept people from god in this passage they are the wise and learned who the god has not revealed himself to in jesus day that would be people known as pharisees the religious leaders of israel and if you met a pharisee you would see outwardly a very religious very zealous person well-dressed seemingly incredibly faithful always ready to tell you what to do how to do the right thing how to follow their wisdom but later in matthew's gospel we will hear jesus say these words of the pharisees they tie up heavy cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them the religious leaders of jesus day are weighing people down with tasks and rules and say if they follow people's instruction the instruction that the pharisees give then people will know god but very simply they're just wrong these people seem wise but they do not know the god who they are speaking of or else they would have seen jesus for who he really is the pharisees can't help people because no level of law following no religious further no trying to earn our place with god will ever get us anywhere near him because true knowledge of god is only possible if he steps down to us true knowledge of god is only possible if we know jesus so what happens to the weary person who comes to jesus seeking rest well we follow along with those last two verses take my yoke upon you and learn from me for i am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light now initially i think that sounds like it doesn't make sense because a yoke is either something you put on a cow to pull a plow or something you put over a person's shoulders so they can carry heavy loads come to me if you're weary and receive a burden says jesus but what jesus means is that coming to him for rest involves putting on his yoke his burden but look at the type of burden jesus offers not a yoke of oppression or a yoke of slavery or of endless exhausting earning your place but one that is light and one that is easy jesus doesn't offer coming to him for total personal freedom with no restrictions what jesus offers is something much deeper and much greater ultimately jesus is offering forgiveness through his eventual death on the cross and resurrection a chance to come

[18:02] and have our relationship with god restored so that we can find rest in knowing the one who made us and being at peace with him forever and not just for this life but for eternity that is the rest that god offers through christ that is the rest that only jesus can give and if you knew that you could be fully forgiven and at peace with god welcomed into his kingdom and into his presence shown the way to live wouldn't you take it this burden he puts on us is the burden of faith and of humility of admitting that our own wisdom gets us nowhere but we can come needing help like a child and receive everything from him it's a real sharp poke in the eye to the proud wisdom of our age and our world that says it knows the way to god but exchanging that wearying burden the world

gives us and putting it down and taking up the thing that is right for us in Jesus is exactly what we need. Jesus invites the crowd and through this gospel invites all who hear it to come to him for rest for their souls. Soul rest at the deepest level is found in true knowledge of God. True rest of the soul is knowing Jesus, and if that wasn't good enough, then let me just point you back to one small detail in verse 29 where Jesus says, "Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, the ruler king of the universe delegated all of God's vast and immense power, the one with the power of life and death and judgment in his hands is the one who invites us to learn from him as a gentle and humble master." Jesus is not a warlord beating us into submission; he is not a heavenly lawyer berating us for our faults. Jesus is a careful shepherd inviting weary and burdened sheep to come to him to find rest for their souls in knowing a humble and gentle savior. So do you want to know God or very simply come to Christ? He is what our souls need at the deepest level, and outside of him, life is full of wearying burdens forever, but with him is true knowledge of God, giving us peace and rest forever. Human wisdom will never find this, and in fact, so much human wisdom says this is silly and laughs and scorns at the gospel, but what Jesus says here is when it does that, it remains lost forever. There are some of you here this evening who need to let go of the human wisdom you cling to, to let go of the "I can find my own way to God" mentality. If you don't repent of that and come to know Jesus, you will never find God, but you are invited to put that down and follow him. There are some here tonight who would call themselves Christians, but you know that you are so often drawn away from that truth, you find yourself walking weary and burdened again, as if you picked up the world's wearying burden and said, "Actually, I must be able to find the way to God in some way that isn't this, and you just forgot that Jesus always keeps inviting you, the kingdom is open to you if you have come to Christ, it will never be shut, and you are at peace with him, you do not need to live as if you are not or as if you need to earn any part of your salvation that you do not have because you have all of it in Christ, so come back."

to him for rest, and maybe you're here looking in and you're not sure if you want to follow Jesus, yet we'll hear the words of Jesus again, "Come to me, he's inviting you to follow him to find rest for your soul that you so deeply need." If that's you and you don't know what the next step is, let me say you can simply pray to God to accept this invitation from Jesus, but if you think that sounds great but I'm still not sure, well, why not come and chat to one of the ministry team here at Sin Silas or the friend that brought you along, why not come to our life course and find out more about Jesus on Tuesday night? If Jesus is this glorious, gentle king, a humble master who welcomes the weary and burdened people, then he is absolutely worth coming to you. That invitation is one we should all accept. Let's pray, Father God, thank you that you invite us home in Christ, that in him there is access to the kingdom and access to knowledge of you, Father, we cannot do that on our own, we absolutely need you, and we pray, Lord, that you would show us the way through Christ to rest forever. Amen.