July 12, 2020

To Know Jesus: Part 2

RE**NEW**ED Series

Matthew, John, & 1 John

Pastor Ryan Harmon

Well, if you've been with us this summer, you've known that we've started a series that's going to take us through the summer, where we're unpacking a vision statement that we're calling RE**NEW**ED because it has continuity with who we've always been as a church and who the church has always been. We say that we want to be a people who are: "*Coming together to know Jesus, become more like Him, and help others do the same."* The first two weeks we unpacked this idea of *Coming Together*. What do we mean when we say we want to be a people that gather? What's the nature of our gathering? And then last week Jeff began to unpack this idea of *Knowing Jesus*. He looked at Paul's words in Philippians 3—what does it mean to know Jesus—and that's where we want to sit again today.

When we say we want to know Jesus, what do we mean by that? You know, I think the truth is, that if you look the world over, you'd be hard pressed to find someone that has ever lived about whom people presume to know a lot, but about who they really know very little. As I was driving back from Omaha yesterday, I was watching—and there was a lot of traffic—and there was a bumper sticker. There was a guy that was flying down the road with a bumper sticker that said, "Do you follow Jesus this closely?" And then he proceeded to pass someone on the shoulder, and I was like, "That's ironic I saw that." You know Jesus' name is on bumper stickers. His name is everywhere. His image is everywhere. You go to the mall; you can find a T-shirt that says, "Jesus is my homeboy," with a smiling Jesus. If you jumped on a plane and you flew somewhere like India or Nepal, or somewhere like Nigeria, I guarantee, as you're walking around one of the cities in those countries, you would find taxis that have His name written across the side, or a truck where it's written on the front—Jesus!

So many people presume to know Him, but I'd argue they have no idea—they don't know the reality—they're guilty of what I'd call *presumed familiarity*. They know a few facts about Jesus, but they don't know the person. They don't know the wondrous reality of who He is, and I think it's very safe to say that for the world at large, that's the truth. But the question I want to consider this morning is: "Is it possible that maybe among us, we maybe fall prey to that kind of thinking sometimes, too? Is it possible that sometimes we are guilty of presumed familiarity with Jesus, knowing about Him, versus knowing Him?"

Well, that's what we want to talk about this morning. As we walk through these thematic texts and these thematic ideas, I'm going to talk about a few different texts, and so I'm going to have the verses up on the screens for you to see. If you want to turn in your Bible to Matthew 9, we're going to finish there. So, you could put your finger in your Bible there, put a bookmark on your phone or save a screenshot. We want to talk about what does it mean *to know*, and how do we make sure that we're people that know the reality, and don't just know about Jesus? Jeff unpacked this idea last week, and he talked about how Paul just had this passion to know Christ. And so I

took that word and I kind of just traced that word through Scripture over this past week. And you know, if you follow that word *know* through the New Testament, what you start to get is, there's clearly this picture of a deep type of knowledge, a deep type of knowing that's so much more than knowing facts, so much more than surface-level knowledge. Sometimes we say it's head knowledge versus heart knowledge. But as I was going through all these verses, I came across one that I think I just want to want to live here for a second. The verse is John 17:3. We'll put it up on the screen here. John says this:

> **This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.** (*NASB, John 17:3)

That they may know You. Now, when we look at the Gospels, Jesus tells us clearly that the demons are even aware of who He is, right? They have the facts. They call him the *Anointed One of God*. And then later in James, James tells us that the demons even know that God is One. They have the details, but clearly, they don't have eternal life, right? You know, this is the one place where eternal life is clearly defined in Scripture, and how does John define it? He says eternal life is this. Jesus says, "It's knowing God—**that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."**

As you do a scan of this word *know* throughout Scripture, what becomes very clear is that surface knowledge, facts, details are incredibly unimportant. What knowledge points to in Scripture is a deep, interactive relationship…a deep, interactive relationship! When we say we want to know Jesus, we don't want to know a few things about Him. We don't want to know some details. We want to live in deep, dynamic relationship with Him. When we say we want to be people that know Jesus, the question is, "Do we know Him that way? Are we living in deep, interactive relationship with Him?" Because that is what we're called to. You know, as you read through the Gospels, you see this distinction come out over and over again—people that know about Jesus and then people who really know Him in this deep, interactive, relational, fellowship kind of way. As I was reading, I came across two different passages that I thought drew this out so well. The first one is in Matthew 13. These are both people in both these passages. These are both people that have lived in and around Jesus. They're from that region that He's from, from His very hometown, from Capernaum, from Galilee. So, in this first passage, Matthew 13, we see people in Capernaum. It says:

> **He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man get this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man get these things?" And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his *own* household." And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.** (Matthew 13: 54-58)

Now, when I think about this little passage, this is tragic to me…absolutely tragic! As you look at those details, what did they get wrong? The truth is they had 100% accuracy in what they were saying about Him; they got the details right. We know the brothers. We know His mom; we know His sister. We know where He's from, right? If there was a Bible trivia game, they passed, right?

They won the game. They knew the details; they knew the information. But I think part of what we see is that in their perceived familiarity with Jesus, they're looking at Him only in terms of these details, obscuring them from who He really was. I'd say they're guilty of this *presumed familiarity*. They thought they knew, but they had no idea. They hadn't entered into this interactive life with Jesus, and the results were tragic.

It says that *He didn't do many works there.* What a cautionary tale the general population of Capernaum is. They had Jesus living right in front of them, right in their midst, and they missed it…they missed it! Can you imagine having Him walking around the streets, and you kind of just set Him aside because, "Yeah, we know Him; that's Mary's Boy." He lives down the street, presuming familiarity, knowing about Jesus but not knowing the reality, not living in an interactive, dynamic relationship with Him.

Now contrast that with one of His disciples—Jesus' disciple John—who was the youngest of His disciples. But it's interesting, he lived the longest. And then as an old man, he wrote 1 John, and he wrote kind of recalling back to what they experienced with Jesus. Listen to this passage and how different this sounds from what we heard from the people in Capernaum. I'm going to read it from *The Message*. I think Eugene Peterson's translation captures the heart of this so well.

> **From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we're telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.**
>
> (*The Message 1 John 1:1-4)

See the difference? **We heard it with our own ears. We saw it with our own eyes**—we beheld it! We lived right with it. We were living in fellowship with it—with this Jesus—living in dynamic, interactive relationship. When we say we want to be a people who know Jesus, we are saying that we don't want to just know some facts. We don't want to just be able to pass the trivia contest. We want to live interactively with Him. We want to live in fellowship with Him.

So I ask this morning, "Is that your experience with Him? Is that what you experience with Jesus?" Because if it's not, I want to tell you, it's the very heart of His invitation to you. Jesus calls people to follow Him. And what He's calling them to is entering in, entering into a dynamic relationship with Him, where they can come to know Him, and He enters into our life and He gets to know us.

So the question is, "How do we start to step into this kind of life? How do we start to step into this interactive relationship with Jesus, a life that's more than facts?" I think to do that we have to look at Jesus' words Himself, right? What was His call? What was His invitation? He didn't say, "Come and learn the cold, hard facts about Me. Make sure you know the details and learn my rap sheet." No, He said, "Follow Me. Come be My disciple; come be My student. Come be My constant companion." Jesus was offering invitations all the time, and the incredible thing about His invitations is, they were open invitations. Jesus wasn't picky in who He invited. He invited anyone. There was no situation too desperate, no situation too difficult. There were no requirements to get

in. The only requirement is that you saw in Jesus, someone where you said, "I want to be near that Person." So, wherever you are this morning, whether you're someone that's followed Jesus for a long time, whether you're a curious seeker and you're saying I know a little bit about Him, the call is the same. The call is to follow Him, get to know Him more and more, live in this interactive relationship with Him! That's what it means to know Jesus, because of course, that's the way relationships work, right?

Relationships are never the kind of thing where it's kind of like you learn a few facts, and now you're done. As I was thinking about this, I thought about a situation with my wife. This is right after we got engaged, a couple days after. And as we're driving along down the road—we were in Omaha at the time—she looked to me and said, "Hey, when we…when we get married, we're still going to go on dates, right?" And I'm a really sensitive, intuitive person, so I understood what she was asking. What she was saying is, "Hey, like, you're not done getting to know me, you're gonna keep pursuing me, right?" Of course that's what she was asking. But I also think I'm pretty funny, and my sarcasm is really thick. And so I don't know that I actually am that funny, but I think I'm funny. And I didn't let my intuition and my sensitivity inform me that now was a bad time to joke, right? So she says, "Hey, we're still going to go on dates," and I said, "Well, you know, we're going to be living together, obviously, and I think that probably after we watch a show or TV show in the evening or whatever, as we're brushing our teeth, we probably can check in and just kind of get caught up on the facts and that'll probably be adequate." And I'm just rolling in my head laughing, right? This is so so good! And I turn to my right and Janae is weeping. Oops! Talk about backpedaling quickly! "Of course, of course we're going to keep getting to know each other; of course the story isn't done. I mean my joke was intended to convey that. What a silly question. Of course we're going to keep dating; of course I'm going to keep pursuing you." But of course her tears were conveying just the wrongness of even the suggestion that, that this relationship could survive on *presumed familiarity*. I have enough details now to propose to her.

We want to live in constant interactive relationship in our marriages and our friendships in our community, in our fellowship, and we want the same with Jesus. We want to know Him. For to know Jesus, we have to seek Him; we have to follow Him. And what He promises us is, as we do that, He will come alongside us, and we will get to know Him. And so the question I want to consider as we move to this next section in Matthew is, "What will we find? When we enter into this knowing relationship with Jesus, what will we discover?" I want to suggest to you that what we discover is His very heart…His very heart!

Turn with me to Matthew 9. Now we could go on forever talking about Jesus and all the facets of His personality, because really, He's so wondrous. We could learn about Him forever, and we could keep finding more and more things to just be amazed by. But in this short passage that takes place in Capernaum, I think we see some beautiful things. I just wanted to reflect on it. So this is Matthew 9, verse 18:

> **While He (**that is Jesus) **was saying these things to them, a *synagogue* official came and bowed down before Him, and said, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live."**

So here's the scene. In the context where people know a lot about Jesus, this is in Capernaum, most likely. There's a synagogue official that certainly was familiar with Jesus and He is desperate. He's in a crisis! You can't reach much more of a crisis than, "**My daughter has just died."** And of course, when we find different crises in our life, we get desperate, don't we? And he's living among a people who are apt to look at Jesus and say, "Yeah, we know Him. That's Mary's Boy, James' brother. That's the carpenter. He lives just down the road." But the synagogue official isn't content to just stay there because he sees in Jesus, someone who can pull him out of the desperate situation he's in. Because when we meet crises, what we realize is that we are not adequate, and we have to cling to someone. We have to seek someone; we have to come to know someone that is adequate to help us come through the moment we're in. And he seeks out Jesus, the One in whom he sees the power to deal with the crisis he's in.

Now a little context will help us to understand the boldness of his claim, because Jesus and this synagogue official, obviously, were Jewish. And in a Jewish context, ceremonial cleanness was really important. And so to ask Jesus to come in and to touch a dead body, was asking Jesus to come make Himself unclean. It was a pretty audacious ask; actually, it was borderline offensive. But I think what the synagogue official knew is that he knew Jesus' heart, right? He knew that Jesus' compassion would not be stifled by protocol, would not be stifled by ceremonial ritual. He saw in Jesus, One who has the power over death and One who is so full of compassion that surely He will come to my aid; surely he will come and help. So he makes this bold claim and what did he find? How does Jesus respond? Verse 19:

> **Jesus got up and *began* to follow him, and so *did* His disciples.**

Jesus goes with him. Jesus is willing to enter the fray. This is Jesus' very heart, right? There is a crisis; there is a situation that is maybe offensive to some. Jesus is willing to enter in. He's willing to get His hands dirty. He's not offended. His compassion overrides all of that. In your life, do you find sometimes that you're almost concerned about inviting Jesus into some of the messes that you find yourself in? I find in my own life, I almost think sometimes I need to clean this up before I invite Jesus in to deal with a situation. Like I think Jesus requires an antiseptically clean environment to come in and work His power, for His compassion to be on display. But that's not who Jesus is at all. Jesus jumps right into the fray. When we find ourselves thinking, maybe Jesus won't come, maybe, maybe this is too much, we need to learn something from the desperate boldness of the synagogue official. See, Jesus is willing to enter. There's nothing that any one of us is going through this morning that's too difficult, too desperate, too off-limits for Jesus. If we would just do what the synagogue official does, we would ask, say, "Jesus, come to my aid." That's who He is. He wants to live interactively with us in all that we're walking through. We want to be people that know Him, that get to know Him in this way. Now, as if this scene isn't crazy enough, it gets crazier. Verse 20:

> **And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself,** (Listen to the desperation in her voice) **"If I only touch His garment, I will get well." But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well.** (Vs. 20-22)

Jesus is willing to enter the unclean room with the corpse—the mortuary! And Jesus is willing to enter in, to engage with this woman that is unclean, right? That's what it would have meant to be hemorrhaging for twelve years, to be bleeding for twelve years! She would have been untouchable by the people in her community. She would have been an outcast, oppressed, and Jesus is willing to enter right into the fray with her. She's a person who I guarantee no one was willing to come near because of her condition. But Jesus is willing. Jesus is walking, loving power, and He enters into engagement with this woman. As power goes out from Him, He turns to her and speaks a kind word, "Your faith has made you well." That's who He is. And the incredible thing is He has invited each one of us to come and know Him, and He will come live interactively with us—this One that possesses all power, and this One who is full of compassion.

Now at this point, the crowd has to be in a tizzy. That's the Greek word; it's an exact translation. (laughter) The desperate synagogue official comes, draws near to Jesus, and Jesus jumps into the fray. The desperate woman comes, presses through the crowd, and touches Jesus garment, and Jesus' power heals her. He enters the fray during the context of her situation. So now He draws near to the synagogue official's house. Verse 23:

> **When Jesus came to the official's house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder,** (This is like a bit of a funeral, right? They're mourning.) **He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep." And they *began* laughing at Him. But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. This news spread throughout all that land.** (Vs. 23-26)

Now I don't know for sure, but it sure seems likely that some of the people that were prone to dismiss Jesus—kind of put Him in a corner, these people that know about Him—they had to be in this crowd. Because the only way that you laugh at someone like Jesus, in this situation, is if you just don't take Him very seriously. So they laugh at Him, and He dismisses the naysayers. And then He goes in and He touches this cold corpse and brings it back to life. And the little girl gets up—His power and His compassion on display.

You know it's remarkable, isn't it? Isn't it just incredible, the people of Capernaum, how did they miss it? How did they have Jesus walking right in their midst, but they were satisfied when the invitation to come and know Him, to live interactively with Him—this interactive relationship with this person is available to them—and they were content to just know the facts, just know a few things about Him? It's amazing, isn't it? You want to say, "How could they be so obtuse," right?

But as I thought about it, I got convicted, and I thought, I don't know that is all that astounding, to be quite honest. Because I think if I'm honest—as I look at my own life—I find myself doing this same thing with Jesus. I find myself slowly drifting towards *presumed familiarity* with Jesus. When the opportunity for this interactive dynamic relationship with Him is available to me, I almost content myself to just keep Him at a distance. I don't want to kind of presume anything about any of you, so I'm only going to talk about myself. But maybe what I find in my own life, maybe…maybe that might connect with some of you, because I sat and thought about. "Why, why do I do this?" A couple of things came to mind.

First thing that came to mind is, I think that probably just because of busyness and distraction, I allow myself to start to think way too small about Jesus. I start to kind of say, "Oh, Jesus, yeah, He was the One born in Bethlehem. He was the One born of the Virgin Mary. He's the One that died on the cross for my sins"—and these are all true statements! But I don't want to content myself to just kind of think about those things and assume that means I'm living interactively with Him; I'm living in this dynamic relationship with Him. Am I living in dynamic relationship with the One that is full of power, that brings the dead back to life, whose compassion pours out on those He's around? Am I living in dynamic relationship with Him or am I content to think small about Jesus? I think I do that sometimes.

Second thing I find is that I think that maybe, as I live my life, I think the truth is I'm just not desperate enough. Now, here is what I mean by that. I look at the synagogue official. I look at this woman that's had this hemorrhage for twelve years, and I think those are pretty bad situations. That's desperation! That's bad! I get it—why they sought Jesus out. But I mean, the stuff I'm dealing with. I don't know that it's so important that I can even impose on Jesus first of all. But second, like I've probably got it; I think I'm able; I'm able to handle what I'm dealing with, whether it be at work or in my family or my neighborhood. I just don't get desperate enough. And the truth is, that's a lie because we live in constant desperation, don't we? We are dependent people. One of the basic understandings and tenants of our faith is that we are completely dependent upon God who is our provider. All that we have comes from Him. So first of all, it's just not true. I need to not believe it. I am desperate. If I don't think I'm desperate; I'm just not looking very closely.

But I think the second thing that's more important for me to realize is that, if I think that way, it makes me less prone to seek Jesus out. And so what I miss out on is the opportunity to live interactively with Jesus, fully dependent upon Him and requiring…requiring that He shows up. Requiring that Someone who is capable to carry the load that I'm carrying, Someone who has shoulders big enough to do it, shows up and I miss out on the opportunity to know Jesus in that way, to live interactively with the most powerful person that has ever lived, and that is still living. So I miss it! Am I living desperately enough? Do I see my life accurately, that I'm completely dependent? No matter what I'm going through, there's no situation that Jesus would be unwilling to come and interact with me there. What an opportunity for those of us that believe, to know this powerful Lord!

The last thing I find in myself is that I think I get nervous, that maybe if I reach out to Him, maybe He won't…maybe He won't show up. Do you ever feel that way? Maybe I'll be like the woman that will work my way through the crowd, will touch the hem of His garment, and He'll turn to me and say, "Not right now." I can't, I'm not gonna deal with that. Maybe His compassion will not be real to me, and so I think that that paralyzes me sometimes. And I think maybe, maybe I shouldn't ask because like hearing a "No" from Him, would be worse than not asking.

But we follow a Lord that is full of compassion. There's no situation that we encounter that He is unwilling to come and do what is good for us…to love us. And sometimes if we think that, that our situation is one that He won't have compassion for, we need to go back, and we need to reflect on His very heart. I think sometimes also, maybe it's possible that some of us feel like my situation's too offensive to Him. But we need to remember that this is a Lord that enters into the fray. He goes in to the dead. There's no situation too offensive for Him.

I have been overseas, and I've seen Him come into some horrible situations. I've been in a brothel in Mumbai where Jesus shows up and works healing in the life of a prostitute, and in the slums in Kenya and in the inner city in Chicago, and in the midst of people dealing with pornography, addiction, and poverty right here in Lincoln. There's no situation that He won't step in and He won't come and live interactively with us. You know, the amazing thing about Jesus is that He is so good that we can cease pretending. It's a humbling thing for me to sit and reflect on these things. But because Jesus knows my heart, He knows my mind. He knows all these things. He knows that I struggle with believing some of these things. So the wonderful thing about just coming to grips with them and acknowledging them to Him, is I can then say to Him, "Jesus, I struggle to believe that You'll show up on this, but help my unbelief. Help me to know You more; help me to know Your very heart. I want to know You. I want to live interactively with You. That's who I want to be!" And He is faithful to show up and come alongside us. As we walk with Him, He helps us become more like Him. He changes us. So we want to be a people, a people that come together to know Jesus.

The question we want to ask this morning is, "Do you know Him that way? Are you living interactively with Him and, if not, what's preventing you from living in this dynamic relationship with Jesus? If it's possible, is it possible that maybe you have just never made the decision to follow Him? And to you this morning, Jesus says, "Follow me." That's His invitation. Maybe you're here and you say, "I don't know that He's capable of dealing with what I'm dealing with at work or at home." And to you He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." There's no One more powerful.

Maybe you're struggling to feel like Jesus would be the compassionate One, that He would show up in a tender way in your life and deal with the difficulty you're dealing with. To you He says, "*Come to Me, all you who are weak and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

I don't know where you are at this morning. But I do know that the Lord who has all the power and who is full of compassion, wants to live interactively with you, and with me, and with us as a congregation. So my charge is, "Let's be people that take up the invitation to follow Him.," because He promises us He will come and enter into our life and live interactively with us, if we do one thing…if we just seek Him. Let's do just that. Will you pray with me?

> *Our Father, we thank You that You are a good God. And, Lord Jesus, we praise You because You're the one that possesses all power, and Your love knows no bound. And so we turn to You. We name You as Lord, and we just want to know You. Help us by Your Spirit to become people who know You more, who live in constant relationship with You. We pray these things in Your name, Amen.*

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RENEWED // WEEK 4

Online Connect Groups Questions
To Know Jesus: Part 2 // Various Passages // July 12th, 2020

Introduction

For the last two weeks, we've explored what it means to **know Jesus**. Last week, Jeff challenged us to think of knowledge as more than *knowing about* someone. On Sunday, Ryan took the definition of knowledge to a deeper level, defining it as an *interactive relationship*.

This week, we will continue our journey to know Jesus in a new way.

Getting to Know Each Other *(Suggested time: 30 min)*

Begin your group time by learning more about each other. Open up and have some fun!

→ If you could spend time with anyone, living or dead, who would it be? What would you want to talk about? What would you like to do together?

→ What do you know a lot about (hobbies, subjects, etc.)? What did it take to gain that knowledge?

Getting Started

Begin to transition into group discussion.

1) Invite someone to open the group in prayer. Here are a few potential prayer items:
    a. For God to reveal His truth and love for the group
    b. For openness to each other and God's voice
    c. For friendships to deepen and grow
2) This week read the passages as you cover the corresponding question.

Study Questions *(Suggested time: 40 min)*

Please complete these questions before your group meets.

1) As you reflect on the message, what's something that stood out to you?

2) **Read Matthew 7:21-23 and Matthew 9:18-19.** Having an interactive relationship with Jesus is more than going through the motions or checking things off a list. It's not enough to know Jesus; He must also know you — it's a relationship of mutual knowledge and interaction. As we've seen with the synagogue official, there were areas of his life he couldn't fix on his own.

    a. What areas of your life do you invite Jesus into (relationships with others, career decisions, hopes/dreams, pain, disappointment, etc.)? What impact has His presence played in those areas?

    b. What areas of your life are you struggling to manage yourself? What might it look like to invite Jesus into those areas?

3) Read Matthew 7:7-8 and Matthew 9:20-22

   a. What character traits do you see in the actions of the woman in this story? (pro tip: look at Matthew 7:7-8 again)

   b. Sometimes, we forget the Father longs to be found and yearns to give. In what ways could you demonstrate faith and courage like the woman in Matthew 9:20-22?

4) Over the last couple weeks, we've learned there is a difference between familiarity with Jesus and an interactive relationship with Him.

   a. Where are you with Jesus, familiarity or interactive relationship? If you're willing, briefly describe.

   b. If you don't know Jesus as well as you would like, how could you begin to know Him more?

   c. If you're already experiencing an interactive relationship with Jesus, He always has more to offer. What could you do to deepen your knowledge and relationship?

Prayer *(Suggested time: 10 min)*

Take a few moments to prepare a prayer request. What did the discussion cause you to notice about your own relationship with Jesus?

A significant part of "coming together" is being open and honest with our lives. Sitting in a group of people for prayer may be new or it may be familiar to you. Whether or not you choose to verbalize your prayer, everyone is a participant in sharing this time before God together.