

What Everybody Knows Before the Gospel Comes

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the significance of Jesus' life and death, highlighting the importance of knowing certain truths before fully understanding their impact. It delves into the innate knowledge of God within each person, the failure to honor and thank Him adequately, and the consequences of sin. The core message focuses on the great exchange in Christianity, where Jesus bore our sins and punishment, offering forgiveness and salvation to all who believe in Him.

Scripture: Romans 1:18, Isaiah 53:4, Acts 10:43, 1 Corinthians 11:27, Ephesians 1:7

Topics: "The Great Exchange", "Understanding Sin and Salvation"

Description

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Transcript

In this week we are celebrating the greatest life that was ever lived and the greatest death that was ever died. There never has been, there never will be a greater life lived than the life of Jesus on the earth. And there never has been a more important death, there never will be a more important death than the death which Jesus died, all of which totally misses the point unless you know something else first.

A great life lived, a great death died has little significance if you don't know something else first. And what has moved me as I've reflected on this evening is that you all know exactly what you need to know concerning what has to go before to make the living of that life and the dying of that death mighty and powerful. You all know.

It is remarkable how the Bible confronts us with what we already know. Listen to these words from Romans 1 and see if they are not true for you. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is known to them, for God has made it plain to them. His invisible attributes, that is His divine nature and power, have been clearly seen from the creation of the world and the things that have been made. Therefore, they are without excuse.

For although they knew God, although they knew God, they did not honor Him or give thanks to Him, but became foolish and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of God for images. And I would add, especially the one in the mirror, isn't that amazing? There is not a person in this room who does not know God.

Profoundly. There is not a person in this room who does not know. God is to be honored and God is to be thanked.

He is infinitely honorable and He has given us everything that we have. He is to be honored and He is to be thanked. There is not a person in this room who does not know.

You have failed to honor Him and thank Him. Anything near like what He deserves. Those are great facts and everybody knows them on the planet.

Amazing. You know something else that goes before. You come to the end of that chapter 1 of Romans and it talks about how you know what all of this implies for you.

All this knowledge and all this failure, you know. It says, though they knew the decree of God that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, they approve of those who do them. Romans 1.32. You hear what that means? Not only do we know God, not only do we know He is to be honored and thanked, not only do we know we have failed and fail every day, all of us, but we also know what the consequence is for us and those who do them, which means that in our minds we are not only suicidal, we are murderous because we approve those who do them knowing that the doing of them deserves death.

So we go online and we endorse the doing of sin. We go to theater and endorse the doing of sin. We conspire with others to join them in sin and thus murder them and kill ourselves.

Isn't it amazing how much we know? You don't need the Bible to know these things, the Bible says, but if you know this, then there is something that you may not know that you need to know and that this evening exists, this table exists to show you. The first phrase of it is on the front of your worship folder. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but, the but there means this isn't what you think it is, but He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole and by His stripes we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray. We knew this. We have turned every one of us to His own way.

We know this and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. We do not know that unless we're told. That isn't communicated through nature, that's communicated in the gospel.

It's communicated tonight out of my mouth to you because God wants you to know that. This service did not begin with God so loves the world for nothing. Yes, the wrath of God is being poured out, but that's not all God pours out.

So the question is now, all right, innately I know there's a God. Innately I know He's to be honored and to be thanked. Innately I know I have failed.

My conscience bears plenty good witness. And now you're telling me that there was a Messiah, a servant, a Son of Man, Son of God who came into the world and surely He has borne my griefs. Though I innately know that the penalty is my own judgment, you're telling me that judgment fell upon Him.

You're telling me that the curse that was upon me fell upon Him and the sins that I committed now have landed on Him. The punishment I deserve went on to Him. Is that what you're telling me? I think that's exactly what I'm telling.

That is the Christian gospel. If you ever wondered what's the heart of Christianity, it is the great exchange. My sin goes to Him.

His righteousness comes to me. He bears my punishment. I gain His reward.

This is the gospel. And the urgent question in this room right now is, so how do I get in on that? I mean, will everybody be forgiven or do you have to do something? Then I'll give you the answer with a verse from the Bible preceded by just a little setting. Some of you know this, some of you may not.

Peter, as we heard, denied Jesus three times. He wept bitterly. Jesus forgave him.

Peter became a great rock in the church, but not all at once. Do you remember the time he was in the Tanner's house on the roof and the sheet came down in a vision filled with unclean animals, unkosher animals? He's Jewish. And the voice came, take, eat.

And Peter said, I've never eaten anything unclean. No. Three times that happened.

Take, eat. Take, eat. A voice from God saying, eat the unclean stuff.

And then there was a knock at the door and Gentiles were there. Uncircumcised, unclean Gentiles. You don't eat with them, you don't go with them.

And the voice said, go down, they've got a message. And the message was, come with us because there's a centurion named Cornelius and God told him to get you to come preach to us so that we might be saved. And he goes down there, walks into the house with these unclean.

He realized, okay, that's what the unclean animals represented. I'm supposed to not count anything unclean anymore that God has cleansed. So I'm here among the Gentiles and I'm sharing the gospel.

It's what I'm doing right now. And the last thing he said in his message after he told the story of Jesus was, to him, to Jesus, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes on his name receives forgiveness of sins. No, you don't do anything to get it.

You believe something. Believing is different from doing because believing is banking on the doing of another. Jesus did something.

We're singing it, we're saying it, we're symbolizing it, we're putting it up, we're just trying to get ourselves in the middle of it tonight. Jesus did the great thing. He died the death we could never die for ourselves and he lived the life we could never live for ourselves.

He bore the punishment that was ours to bear and he took the curse that was ours to be cursed with. He did the doing. Now, to him, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in his name benefits.

It becomes yours. You know why? Because believing in Jesus, receiving him as the great doer of all you need done for you that you can't do, unites you to him. And when you're united with Jesus, all that he is, he is for you.

And all his forgiveness is your forgiveness. If you stay away from him, this great achievement is not yours. So, there are people in this room who are at a critical moment because as we eat now and drink, the only people, the Bible says, who should eat and drink worthily are believers.

We invite you to eat with us if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. If you are not banking on yourself, somehow weighed in the scales, you go down. You won't.

You go up. Jesus is the only one who goes down in the scale of justice. So, the question now is, are you throwing yourself on him for mercy? Is he your only hope for forgiveness, for the fulfillment of all of his promises to you, even eternal life? Or are you somehow banking on yourself, your tradition, your family, your achievement, your devotion, your pastoral role? And if so, we welcome you to eat.

If not, have integrity. And just when the tray comes, deal with God. Deal with God.

You're not here by an accident. I don't know, I can't barely even see you, so I can't even make any judgments about who's here, let alone why you're here. God knows why.

And it's to hear these songs, this message, see this enacted, and be confronted with the most important news you've ever heard.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/iNXgYFzk1I4.mp4>

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