

## **Known completely...and loved deeply**

September 6, 2009

Known completely...and loved deeply! Hebrews 4: 12-16. This is one of the most important and comforting passages in the Bible to me. It speaks to us of how much God knows us and how much he loves us. Let's break it down some.

It is in the middle of the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a unique letter in the New Testament. It is not signed, and we are unsure who wrote it. Some say Paul, some say Barnabas, some Aquilla. We don't know. It was written for Jewish Christians, to help them transition from the Jewish traditions and beliefs...as well as the Jewish teachings that had gone astray and that Jesus had taught against...to the teachings of Christ and the freedom that comes from him. A freedom from the law, from living in fear of God's judgment. When you live under the law, when you think you are getting to heaven by doing good and following the rules...you are really living in dread of breaking the rules. If you break just one...your hosed. You hope God grades on the bell curve! But God does not use the curve at all, God's curve is in the form of a cross...more on that in a moment.

So the passage is a transition passage in the book of Hebrews. It speaks of God's knowledge of us. It begins by talking about the Scripture. The bible, it says, is active and alive. The Scripture is more than just words on a page. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit as it is written, and it is imbued with the Holy Spirit as we read it. It speaks to us as nothing else. It touches our souls and reaches deep within our minds...it can set us free. It unlocks the hidden areas within, the secret places that we thought were forever dark. But God's word can touch them. Each time we read it, it speaks to us in new ways, because we are different people than the last time we read it. It is sharper than any sword, and it penetrates deep, even to soul and spirit and judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The scripture conveys the Holy

Spirit of God, and so nothing is hidden. We are told that the scripture searches us and knows us...knows our minds more than we know ourselves. And here we are told that everything is laid bare to God. Everything. There are no secrets from God. If you think you are hiding something from God, you are fooling yourself. God knows all about you...the number of hairs on your head, the number of cells in your body, the number of chips you eat at lunch or fries you sneak from your spouse's plate while they are in the rest room! God knows your thoughts, your desires, your hopes and dreams and fears and dreads. God knows it all. Everything is laid bare and nothing is held back. Some of you would be ashamed of, some of it proud of, some of it makes you angry, some happy...

Guess what, you are normal. You are human. You are frail and flawed and sinful and normal and broken. Welcome to the human race. We are all made in God's image, but we are also all children of Adam, all sinners by nature and by habit. And God loves us anyway. He knows it all, going in, and he does not care. His love is not blind, far from it. His love sees more clearly than we will ever really know, and he loves us so deeply that he sent his one and only son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven...Amazing Love, how can it be, that thou my God wouldst die for me! God does not love your image, he does not love humanity in general, but you specifically...you individually! God knows the reality. God loves us.

We might be tempted to hide in shame...but this text calls us to the opposite response. Christ came to be among us. He became human, as we all are. He was tempted, really tempted, in all things as we are..yet without sin.

Jesus sympathizes with us and all our longings, all our faults and failures. All our hurts and hopes, our dreams and disappointments... Jesus understands them all. He knows the human struggle first hand. The battles we fight daily with ourselves, with temptation, with each other, with the world. He can understand and sympathize. This should

change how you pray. He knows what it is like. He gets it. Don't be afraid to be honest with him.

And approach with confidence the throne of Grace. Jesus' throne, his kingdom is built upon Grace. It is built upon his love expressed in giving to us even when we don't deserve or earn it. Above and beyond what we expect or deserve.

He knows all about us, and he loves us anyway. He invite us to come near, to come with confidence. To approach because he loves us...and to receive the twin blessings of Mercy and Grace.

Mercy is forgiveness...where we don't get what we do deserve. Mercy is when we are stopped by the Highway patrol office for going 90 on the 101, and we don't get a ticket. We deserve one, we earned one, we were speeding...even if everyone else was speeding too. We were going faster than 65. But Mercy is tender and kind, and relents...Mercy overcomes judgment.

Grace is when we do get what we don't deserve. Grace is when the same Highway Patrol office who stopped us for speeding on the 101 decides to give us free tickets to the San Jose Sharks game coming up because he thinks we need a boost and he can't go anyway...so instead of a \$400 ticket we deserve and should pay, we get \$500 shark tickets we get to enjoy instead! Wow! That's grace! Grace is undeserved and unearned and given freely and wholly out of love. God's grace is lavished upon us in Christ Jesus!

This passage reminds us that God knows us completely. That there is nothing hidden from him, and we are completely laid bare to God...but that he loves us anyway. And out of his love, he has sent his son Jesus to be our savior. He comes to be with us and among us...and he can sympathize with our human longings and needs and failures for he was tempted as we are in all things...yet he did not sin...

Therefore we are encouraged to draw near to the throne of Grace with confidence...and to receive Mercy and Grace in our times of need...

Communion is a great symbol for this. We are invited to come to the table, the place of Jesus' love and sacrifice. He calls each and every one of us, whether we are a member of this church or any church. All are welcome, all are called. We come in humility, knowing that we are laid bare, and that we are all sinners who come. We all are in need of his forgiveness and grace. We come to receive his mercy and his grace, symbolized in the bread and the wine...the actions he gave us to use to remember him by. Take, eat and remember.. Take, drink, and remember...this is my body, given for you, this is the cup of the new covenant given for you and for many for the forgiveness for Sin...take and drink of it all of you...and as often as you do it, remember me.

Draw near with confidence so that you may receive Mercy and find Grace to help you in your times on need. Come, the table is set. The Lord is here to meet you. Come, he waits to make you whole.