

## **KNOWING AND BEING KNOWN A SERMON ON JOHN 17:1-26**

**by Rev. Russell B. Smith**

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**B**efore we dig into this passage, let's take a brief survey. Be honest, please. How many of you have watched either Jerry Springer or the Ricki Lake Show? I know, I know, it's like a bad accident — you don't want to watch, but when you come across it, sometimes you just can't help it. If you could pick one dominant emotion that is expressed most often on those shows, what would it be? Probably Anger. Rage even. These shows parade hurting people onstage — people who are dealing with serious broken relationships or serious dysfunction — and they subject them to the ridicule of an audience whose main goal is to cleverly insult those onstage. Once the audience identifies whom they're going to dislike, they shower them with boos and catcalls, and invariably, the person onstage shouts out to the crowd repeatedly "You don't know me! You don't know me!" But where does all this rage come from?

Some might say the producers of the shows manufacture it in order to sell advertising. Though this theory is true, I believe it misses out on something deeper in our society. It appears to me that there is a cry of rage within our culture today. Yes, ours is a culture of accomplishment and success and positive thinking — never-say-die attitudes. However, there is also a swelling, dissonant note of rage.

Ultimately, where does this rage come from? Anger arises primarily when we feel violated in some way — when we feel like something that is rightfully ours has been taken away. But what does our society leach from us?

Each of us carries the image of God. By virtue of being human, we carry God's image, and therefore we each have an innate sense of our own dignity. Deep inside, each of us wants this dignity to be recognized and affirmed. It's part of our design and makeup as human beings created in God's image.

The problem is that we live in an imperfect world that does not recognize our own dignity. And when we're honest with ourselves, we very rarely recognize and affirm the dignity of others. Thus we're left with this sense of our own individuality and dignity, yet with the feeling that no one really knows that about us. All they really know are the surface things. So many, even those who have many friends, are left feeling isolated and alone because no one recognizes or knows the "real me" Some respond by burying the feelings of isolation, some respond with depression, some try even harder

to earn the recognition of their own dignity, but increasingly, people are responding with rage.

Today's passage responds to that feeling of isolation by showing that we can be known. We can actually be known more fully than we ever dreamed — we can be known in the fullness of our dignity with which we were designed. Jesus tells us that despite the crushing feeling of aloneness, we can both know God and be known in full. That having been said, let's dig into his Word in John 17:1-26.

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as

you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

First thing, notice that Jesus focuses on knowing God. Look at verses 1-3. Jesus came to give eternal life, and that eternal life is about knowing God. Ancient Israelites had a different understanding than ours about *knowing*. When we think *knowing*, we think about head knowledge and data. The ancients conceived of knowing as an experience or an encounter. As an example, look at Jeremiah 31:33-34. This is God talking about the renewed relationship he will have with his people. Notice that he does talk about facts — writing the law on their minds, but it's about much more than that. Knowing God is being in relationship with God — experiencing his presence and his forgiveness. Indeed, this passage shows us that knowledge of God is the apex of all creation.

Now jump down to verses 25-26 (Righteous Father, though the world does not know you...). Jesus makes the Father known to us. How? Through the teaching in the Scriptures — through the record of God's work for his people; through the work of the Holy Spirit within each believer. Jesus enables us to recognize God's presence all around us. He prompts us to pray — prayer is quite simply talking with God. I meet some people who say "I just don't know what to say to God in prayer" — they kind of imagine God as this stern, aged English actor who demands everything we say to him be spoken in Shakespearian English. I know we preachers sometimes give that impression in the way we pray in public worship here. But be sure that part of knowing God is being able to talk freely with Him. As an example, look at Exodus 33:12-17. Moses talked freely with God. This isn't a mystical getting in touch with your inner God-ness. This is a give and take relationship where God responds to Moses, and Moses responds to God. In the same way, you can talk freely to God. You can go to him and say "God, I'm having a tough day — I'm really dying here. Let me tell you about it." Jesus makes it possible for us to know God — to enter into this intimate deep relationship in which we can talk with Him.

To what end — in order that the Father's love might be in us and that Jesus might be in us. What does it mean to have Jesus in us? In part, it means that we are fully known. It means that Jesus knows everything that there is to know about us. Not

only does he fully know our dignity as bearing the image of God, but he knows all our sin. He knows those thoughts that pop into your head when you are trying to pray. He knows those little things you try to hide from everybody else. He knows everything — and he still accepts you, not based on anything you've done, but simply out of his own good pleasure. Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast reminds us of this truth." So part of being known in full is that Jesus knows us in the height of our dignity but also in depth of our depravity — and he still accepts us.

In addition to this full knowing, this idea of Jesus within us also means that we'll never be alone. Remember back to John 14:15-18, where Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will be intimate with his disciples. He says that the Holy Spirit will be in us forever, meaning that we are not left as orphans. No matter how isolated we are, no matter how much the world out there refuses to recognize your dignity, you are not alone. When we talked about this passage before, we saw that the Holy Spirit reminds us of our standing with the Father — that we can never be shaken from His hand. Here again, Jesus comes back to the same idea — that he is within us. Let me be clear — this is not pantheism — the idea that God, as a substance, is everything and that everything is God. Rather, this is the idea that Jesus establishes an intimate relationship with his beloved through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This knowing and being known has tangible results. As you know the Eternal one in an intimate relationship and as you realize you are fully known and fully accepted, you cannot help but be transformed. Two immediate transformations are sanctity and unity. Look at verses 17-19, "Sanctify them by the truth." To *sanctify* means "set apart for special use."

When Tammy and I got married, I had no idea why we needed two sets of china. I just wanted simple plates. Why did we have to go through this rigmarole of picking out two sets of china? And then there were all the extras that went along with the formal china — gravy boats, bread plates, a whole set of formal flatware, I'm still trying to figure out what a demitasse cup is. And here's the kicker, you get all this elegant formal china you make sure it's extra clean and stored in a special china cabinet, and then you only use it twice a year!

In a way, being sanctified means that we're like that formal china. Jesus makes sure we're clean and then he reserves us for something special. We're not drawn into this knowing and being known relationship so we can just go on with life as we please — we're drawn into such a special relationship because God has *plans* for us. God has something wonderful and exciting for you to do. You have been set aside for special use.

The other practical result is unity with other believers. Look at verses 20-23. Jesus prays for all those who believe through the message. That means us. Jesus prayed for you and Jesus prayed for me. If Jesus is in all of you, then part of our job is

to recognize that Jesus is in our brothers and sisters. I know it's hard because it's so easy to think about the hurtful words or the time they let you down or the annoying mannerisms. But never forget that Jesus is within them. Everyone who claims Christ as Lord and Savior is your brother or sister — it doesn't really matter whether or not you like them.

Remember earlier when we talked about the rage within that comes from not having dignity recognized? If ever there were anyplace on earth where the dignity of each person should be affirmed, if there ever was anyplace where we celebrate God's image that each of us bears, if there ever was anyplace where we recognized within each other the power and glory that created the universe, if there was ever any such place, *it is the church*. Not the building, but the people. Does the church live up to that all the time, no — but that's what we're called to be. That's part of God's design for us. That's part of what it means in verse 22 when it says we have been given Jesus glory that we may be one.

A final thing to notice — verse 18 (As you sent...) and verse 23 (I in them...). The result of our living out this knowing and being known relationship is that the world watches and sees. So many think that becoming a Christian means that you have to become weird for Jesus. The point is not that we become weird, but rather we become refreshingly different. We become a breath of fresh air. Paul has a great picture of this in 2 Corinthians 2:14 — we're a refreshing fragrance. Have you ever been on an elevator when someone with refreshing cologne came on — I'm not talking about the people who bathe in cologne so that you see it coming off him or her in waves. I'm talking about those folks who put just enough on for you to catch a hint. You walk away from their presence feeling refreshed. Most men don't get this idea, so consider this perspective — have you ever come into a home where someone had been baking fresh bread or cookies? You feel refreshed and warmed.

Our unity as Christians — our sanctity and set apartness carries over into every interaction we have with people. We carry that fragrance around with us and people should leave feeling refreshed and renewed without knowing why. When we know God; When we realize that we are fully known and fully accepted; When we realize that we are set apart for something special; When we recognize that other believers are also fully known and accepted by God, then we carry ourselves in such a way that the world cannot help but take notice.

You know, I used to get angry about the Jerry Springer show and the Ricki Lake show. I used to get angry that they would seem to revel in behavior that was obviously destructive. Then, when I started paying attention to what was going on with the people onstage, I could only feel sad. These people were full of rage and anger and hurt, and they didn't really understand why. They were trying to relieve the pain by venting rage, but it didn't help. I feel sad for the guests on those shows. I wish they knew the Savior that I know — that Savior who never leaves. The Savior who knows everything about

me still accepts me anyway. The Savior who is committed to making me better and better.

There may be some of you here today who don't know that Savior — you may know a lot of facts about him, but you don't know him personally. You may not have experienced his presence in your life. Or perhaps you have experienced that relationship, but you've let it fade and you're in need of renewal. If that describes you, then as I pray, let your heart silently say amen to these words.

Jesus, I have faith in you and I trust you. I know that you are there and you love me. I know that you know everything there is to know about me. You know all the good stuff that I wish everyone else would see. You also know the bad stuff that I wish I could hide away. You know it all and you still love me. Jesus, I want you in my life. I want to know you more deeply. Help me to see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly. Help me to live every moment for you and you alone. I love you as best I know how, help me to love you more. I pray all this in your name, Lord Jesus, Amen.