

# The Knowing of the Son

Third Series – Sermon Twenty-Six

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Do we KNOW the Son? Or is who we know an imposter? This knowing makes all the difference in the world, both now and later! "*And **this is eternal life**, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*" (John 17:3 NAS).

If Jesus came in on a Greyhound bus and slept on a park bench downtown, would we, upon hearing the reports of this strange auto mechanic, be the first to run to listen to Him speak? Would we turn over our pulpits and churches to Him? Are we confident enough in hearing His voice and seeing His ways that we would sell all and sit at His feet and follow Him out of town on the next bus?

Let us not kid ourselves that we are different from those that preceded us! The Jews thought they knew God. So, how would we know? That His teaching on faith agreed with ours? That His thoughts were with our reasoning on doctrine? That He was following our tradition? The Jesus of two thousand years ago did none of that with the Jews of His day, and He probably would not with us today! Is Jesus our best friend with which we share all? Does our world, our circle, know us by our love for one another? This Love is THE KNOWING! Not what we think, but what we live in union and dependence on Them!

## Outline

**Knowing Jesus** - Knowing Jesus is not found in mental assent but in following in His footsteps.

**Rejection by the Jews** - Jesus came within the womb of Israel, within their conversation with His Father.

**Jesus' Answer** – The Jews should have recognized the Father's Spirit and received Him as their Master!

**Rejection Today** - Have we learned from their example? Following Him today is so that tomorrow will take care of itself!

**Common Presentation** - Have we abandoned the God of religion for the one walking beside us?

### **John 5:37-38 KJV & Phillips**

*"Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not."*

*"Now you have never at any time heard what he says or seen what he is like. Nor do you really believe his word in your hearts, for you refuse to believe the man who he has sent. You pore over the scriptures for you imagine that you will find eternal life in them. And all the time they give their testimony to me! But you are not willing to come to me to have real life!"*

### **Knowing Jesus**

God does not care whether we find certainty in His words or not. He knows our tendency to hold onto words and logic and our willingness to be oppressed through them. He knows mere words cannot contain nor fully express what He means and that even He must depend upon the Spirit in His disciples to be understood. If you believe in personal inspiration then the question for you is whether you have the Spirit of Christ within you. You must ask and answer this question for yourself. If the answer is "Yes", then you must ask yourself, am I alive with the Life of Christ and does His Spirit live in me? Everyone who follows Jesus has His spirit and grows so they can follow closer and nearer in His footsteps. We are not asked to prove to anyone that we have the Light of Christ, but we need to let our light shine.

**We can only understand the words of Christ in the proportion to which we are one with Him. To those who receive His words, they are the power of Life, not fodder for arguments. The words of the Lord are not for the sake of logic but for the purpose of Their thoughts becoming our thoughts. No ideas, human or divine, can be received from person to person except through the symbolism of creation. The heavens and the earth are around us to speak to us of the unseen by the seen. The minor things in creation speak of the most profound things in God. He is not a God that hides, but He created in order that He might more easily be seen.**

### **Rejection of the Jews**

If Jesus spoke the words in our opening passage, He meant more, not less, than lies on the surface. These words were not just assertions of what was apparent, nor were they repetitions of familiar logical

arguments. They were not said to accuse the Jews of something that they would not have dreamed of denying. For none of them would have claimed to have heard or seen God. Even John himself said, "No man has seen God at any time." So, what is the tone of the passage? It was a reproach, an expression of disappointment. Then He rebukes them for not having seen God when no one has. So what did he mean by this?

The word *seen* is used in two different ways. In one, it means seen with the eyes, in the other, with the soul. The one is said of all men, but the other only of the Jewish leaders. Indeed, no man has physically seen God. It is also true that some men should have seen Him. No one has seen Him with their natural eyes, but the Jews should have seen Him with their spiritual ones.

**The disappointment in Jesus' words is a rebuke to those who should have seen Him and did not. Let's look closer at His words. "Ye have not heard his voice at any time," this could mean, "You have never listened to His voice," or "You have never obeyed His voice," but the additional phrase, ". . . nor seen his shape," keeps us focused on relationship. The sound of His voice was unknown to you. You had not heard His voice to know it or seen what He is like. Plainly Jesus is implying that you should have known my voice and recognized me. The scriptures you say you trust in for eternal life are clearly not at home in you.**

This argument of the Lord's was of little consequence, of little use, to those whom it was most needed. Unfortunately, those who needed it most were the most incapable of hearing its message. But it would have a significant impact on the others who stood listening. Their minds were more open, and their hearts were drawn to His.

## **Jesus' Answer**

**His argument was simple. If you had ever heard the Father's voice, recognized His call, or cared for His will so that his word was at home in your hearts, then you would have known Me when you saw Me! If you had imagined him or a God like him then you would have known that I came from my Father and was His messenger. You would have listened to me because you knew Him and so recognized the similarity I have with my Father. You would have seen Him in me. That you do not know me is that you did not know Him as your Father and mine. You have refused to do His will and so have not heard His voice. You have closed your eyes from seeing Him and refer to Him only in advancing your partisan ambitions. If you had loved the Father, you would have recognized His Son. I think even if you had loved your neighbor, you would have recognized Me.**

## **Rejection Today**

Suppose Jesus were to appear today in England as He once did in Palestine. It would not be with a halo or an effeminate beauty of sweet weakness as the helpless religious constantly represent Him. Neither would He come as a carpenter, mason, or gardener. He would come in a form and condition that we today would consider as ordinary. If He came as an everyday person, would we recognize and receive Him?

This idea is not ridiculous. Jesus is not far from us even now. The gospel tells us that "He will never leave us or forsake us". He could at any moment appear. **Would I be the first to receive Him? Now, as then, it would be the childlike and least selfish among us. It would probably not be the theologians and**

**church leaders, for the childlike are still the few and the least.** And it probably would not be those who know the most about His previous visit and have diligently studied the Greek.

**It would undoubtedly be those most like their Master. Those who do the will of their Father. Those who have built their house on the rock of hearing and doing His words.** And there are plenty like Him that would know at once His voice and the look upon His face. Unfortunately, many have been taken in by false Christs fashioned after their own desires and would reject the Lord as a poor imposter. One thing is sure. Those who recognize Him are those who love righteousness and hate iniquity.

## **Common Presentation**

We must remember that many have false images of God but have live hearts. Live hearts that are open towards everything human and divine. Ones clothed in religious robes that hide the loveliest form of Christ. Even the best traditions of the elders will not clothe anyone, much less the unworthy traditions of men.

**If the Lord were to appear today, many who accept His common presentation would not recognize the new as another incarnation of the old. Jesus has been so misrepresented by many claiming to represent Him that even the eternal truth of His relationship with His Father would be impossible to see. For my part, I would rather believe in no God than the one generally offered!** Many would not even search to see if He was genuine, nor investigate those who make false claims mingling beauty with ugliness. However, some would gladly grasp the hope that such beauty could be true. Still others would not even care to uncover the almost discredited tale of a perfect son revealing a perfect Father. These people are not hungry enough to desire the truth. The truth that demands they change their lives and trust in Him. But we all, beholding the Glory of the Lord, will be transformed into the same image.

## **CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES**

### **Knowing Jesus**

The mind of man can receive any word only in proportion as it is the word of Christ, and in proportion as he is one with Christ. To him who does verily receive his word, it is a power, not of argument, but of life. The words of the Lord are not for the logic that deals with words as if they were things; but for the spiritual logic that reasons from divine thought to divine thought, dealing with spiritual facts. No thought, human or divine, can be conveyed from man to man save through the symbolism of the creation. The heavens and the earth are around us that it may be possible for us to speak of the unseen by the seen;

### **Rejection by the Jews**

The reproach in the words of the Lord is the reproach of men who ought to have had an experience they had not had. Let us look a little nearer at his words. 'Ye have not heard his voice at any time,' might mean, 'Ye have never listened to his voice,' or 'Ye have never obeyed his voice' but the following phrase, 'nor seen his shape,' keeps us rather to the primary sense of the word hear: 'The sound of his voice is unknown to you;' 'You have never heard his voice so as to know it for his.' 'You have not seen his shape;'—'You do not know what he is like.' Plainly he implies, 'You ought to know his voice; you ought to know what he is like.' 'You have not his word abiding in you;'—'The word that is in you from the beginning, the word of God in your conscience, you have not kept with you, it is not dwelling in you; by yourselves accepted as the witness of Moses, the scripture in which you think you have eternal life does not abide with you, is not at home in you.'

### **Jesus' Answer**

His argument was this: 'If ye had ever heard the Father's voice; if ye had ever known his call; if you had ever imagined him, or a God anything like him; if you had cared for his will so that his word was at home in your hearts, you would have known me when you saw me—known that I must come from him, that I must be his messenger, and would have listened to me. The least acquaintance with God, such as any true heart must have, would have made you recognize that I came from the God of whom you knew that something. You would have been capable of knowing me by the light of his word abiding in you; by the shape you had beheld however vaguely; by the likeness of my face and my voice to those of my father. You would have seen my father in me; you would have known me by the little you knew of him. The family-feeling would have been awake in you, the holy instinct of the same spirit, making you know your elder brother. That you do not know me now, as I stand here speaking to you, is that you do not know your own father, even my father; that throughout your lives you have refused to do his will, and so have not heard his voice; that you have shut your eyes from seeing him, and have thought of him only as a partisan of your ambitions. If you had loved my father, you would have known his son.' And I think he might have said, 'If even you had loved your neighbour, you would have known me, neighbour to the deepest and best in you.'

### **Rejection Today**

I ask, would be the first to receive him? Now, as then, it would of course be the childlike in heart, the truest, the least selfish. They would not be the highest in the estimation of any church, for the childlike are not yet the many.

It would certainly, if any, be those who were likest the Master—those, namely, that did the will of their father and his father, that built their house on the rock by hearing and doing his sayings.

### **Common Presentation**

If the Lord were to appear, the many who take the common presentation of thing or person for the thing or person, could never recognize the new vision as another form of the old: the Master has been so misrepresented by such as have claimed to present him, and especially in the one eternal fact of facts—the relation between him and his Father—that it is impossible they should see any likeness. For my part, I would believe in no God rather than in such a God as is generally offered for believing in.