

SERMON – CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SUNDAY

“WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW”

Romans 8:31-39

Did you know that in the last 10 years human knowledge has doubled? There has been as much learned in the last decade as there has been in the hundreds and thousands of years of human history!

In fact, every minute 2000 complete pages are added to human knowledge. Everyday enough is learned that it would take the average person 5 years to read it all.

Did you know that 80% of the world’s scientists who have ever lived are alive today, and that 70% of the medicines we use today were discovered in the last 50 years?

The Webb space telescope is telling us more about planets and galaxies deep in space than ever before.

And you can access all this now instantly through the Internet. Your computer puts massive amounts of information at your fingertips right at home, on your tablet, or in your pocket on your phone.

The challenge of learning in our “Information Age.”

Now with all that information, how in the world can you sort through it and assimilate it? How do you decide what you will give your attention to and what you won't? Because you can't learn at all!

More and more people are asking, “What do I need to learn this for?” out of all the information bombarding us each day we only want knowledge that will be helpful to us -- relevant for our lives.

We only learn what we think is Relevant.

“What do I need to learn this for?”

For teachers the question of relevancy is not a new question. Students have always asked, “Why do I need to learn this stuff?”

Maybe you, yourself once asked: “Why do I need to factor quadratic equations? What difference will learning about the Roman invasion of Britain making my daily life? Why should I learn the atomic weight of elements on a periodic table in chemistry? Or be able to discuss the customs and economy of Botswana?”

Sometimes learning seems pointless to us, like it has no practical benefit for our lives. Even in the Bible, the writer of the

book of Ecclesiastes said, *“Of the making of books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.”* Ecclesiastes 12:12

A problem arises, however, when we approach the Bible with the same attitude. For many people, and for many of us here, the Bible seems out-of-touch with daily life, irrelevant to us – just a collection of bedtime stories, or a bunch of facts about ancient people who are long since dead.

Let me be blunt: we know that we live in a society that is becoming more and more Biblically illiterate. People today know far less about Scripture than the people a generation or two ago – and we, the people of this congregation, are no exception!

I am not speaking as a great scholar of Scripture, because I’m not! Yet, I know that many adults and children simply don’t know the basics of what we believe. We are unfamiliar with the story of Jesus’ life and other Bible stories. These are facts on which our Faith and our hope of heaven are based upon.

We say we’re too busy – too busy to take the time to use a devotional guide, read the Bible, and pray each day. We’ve got more important matters than to attend a Bible study, and we’re too busy to see that our children are in Kids’ Church and Confirmation Classes. We aren’t doing those things we should at home to teach them about Faith in Jesus.

God’s **Third Commandment** to us is, **“Remember the Sabbath Day”** and the meaning of that Commandment is that we need to take time in our lives for worship, and daily spiritual growth. This Commandment means that we are not to treat God’s Word as irrelevant. Instead, we are to treasure it.

The parable of the Sower in today’s Gospel Reading reminds us to be soil where God’s Word is actually growing and not choked out by fears, busyness, and distractions – distractions like TV, social media, and surfing the internet on our phones.

You see, the Bible is not irrelevant to everyday life! It is very relevant! Because through the Bible God gives us the knowledge we need more than anything else. Martin Luther once wrote:

“Though people were to place all books of all faculties on earth before us, we still could not acquire from them a knowledge of the origin of Adam,

sin, and death, or of the effect of sin. For Holy Scripture alone teaches these things. This is why we should study it, for through it we become wiser than the entire rest of the world. Whoever does not consult Scripture will know nothing whatever. Now we know how we are to die, where we are to go, also how we may escape death and the devil, who has redeemed us, and how we are to get these great treasures. These things we learn only from this book of Holy Scripture.” ~ Martin Luther

In his letter to the Romans, in chapter 8, St. Paul shares the answers to four questions. These are questions that are *only* answered by God – and the answers are *only* given in Scripture. Are the answers relevant? You bet they are! Because these are questions you’ve asked. And the answers are what you – and all people – really need to know. The questions you’ve asked in the night. In anger you’ve asked them. The doctor’s diagnosis brought them to the surface, so did the court’s decision and the phone call from the bank. The questions come from pain and problems. No, the questions are not new, but maybe the answers are.

What You REALLY NEED to Know:

The first question you really need to know the answer to is **1. The Question of PROTECTION**. Paul writes the question this way: *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* Romans 8:31

The question is not simply, “Who can be against us?” you could answer that one. Who is against you/ disease, inflation, corruption, exhaustion. Calamities confront us and fears impression us. Were the question, “Who can be against us?” we could list our enemies. But, that is not the question. The question is, *IF GOD IS FOR US, who can be against us?*

Four words in this verse deserve your attention. They are, “God – is – for – us.” Let me emphasize each word.

GOD is for you. Your parents may have forgotten you, your teachers may have neglected you, your siblings may be ashamed of you; but within reach of your prayers is the maker of the universe: **GOD!**

God **IS** for you. Not “may be,” not “has been,” not “was,” not “would be,” but “God IS!” He IS for you. Today. At this hour. At this minute. No need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He is with you. He could not be closer than He is at this second. He IS for you.

God is **FOR** you. God's cheering for you. God's applauding your steps. Too tired to continue? God will carry you. Too discouraged to fight? He's picking you up. God is FOR you.

God is for **YOU**. If He has a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If God drove a car, your name would be in a sticker on His back window. If there's a tree in heaven, He's carved your name in the bark.

God is with you. Knowing that, who is against you? Can death harm you now? Can disease rob your life? Can your purpose be taken from you? Or your value diminishes? NO! Even if hell itself is against you, no one can defeat you. You are protected. God is with you.

The next question that we really need to know the answer of is:

2. The Question of PROVISION.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32

Suppose a man comes upon a child being beaten by thugs. He runs into the mob, rescues the boy, and carries him to a hospital. The boy is nursed back to health. The man pays for the child's treatment. He learns that the boy is an orphan and adopts him as his own, and give the boy his name. and then, one night, months late, the father hears the son sobbing into his pillow. He goes to him and asks why he is crying.

"I'm worried, Daddy. I'm worried about tomorrow. Where will I get food to eat? How am I going to buy clothes to stay warm? And where will I sleep?"

The father responds by asking: "Haven't I shown you? Don't you understand? I risked by life to save you. I gave my money to heal you. You wear my name. I've called you my son. Would I do all that and then not take care of you?"

That's the question asked in this Bible verse. *Would He who gave His Son not meet our needs?*

But still we worry. We worry about the IRS. We worry about education, recreation, and indigestion. We worry that we won't have enough money, and when we have money we worry that we won't manage it well. We worry that the world will end with time left on the parking meter. We worry what the dog things if he sees us step out

of the shower. We worry that someday we'll learn that fat-free yogurt was fattening all along.

Honestly now. Did God save you so you would fret? Would He be nailed o the cross for your sins and then disregard your prayers? Come on.

He didn't even spare His own Son! Won't He also provide you with everything you really need?!

The third question that we really want to know the answer to – and the answer is found only in Scripture – is **3. The Question of GUILT and GRACE.**

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” Romans 8:33-34

Sometime ago I read a story of young boy who was shooting rocks with a slingshot. He could never hit his target. One day in Grandma's backyard, he saw her pet duck. On impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck was dead. The boy panicked and hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching.

After lunch that day, Grandma told Sally to help with the dishes. Sally responded, “Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you Johnny?” and she whispered to him, “Remember the duck!” So, Johnny did the dishes. What choice did he have?

For the next several weeks he was at the sink often. Sometimes for his duty, sometimes for his sin. “Remember the duck!” Sally whispered every time he objected.

Finally, he decided that any punishment would be better than washing more dishes, so he confessed to killing the duck. His Grandma said, “I know, Johnny. I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave out of you.”

He had been pardoned, but he thought he was guilty. Why? He had listened to the words of his accuser.

You've been accused as well. You have been accused of dishonesty. You've been accused of immorality. You've been accused of greed, anger, and jealousy.

Every moment of your life, your accuser is filing charges against you. He has noticed every error and marked each slip up. Neglect your priorities, and your accuser will jot it down. Abandon your promises, and he will make a note. Try to forget your past; he'll remind you.

Who is your accuser? The devil. His name "Satan" literally means "accuser."

Can't you see him? Pacing back and forth before God's bench. Can't you hear him? Calling your name, listing your faults.

As he speaks, you hang your head. You have no defense. His charges are true. "I plead guilty, your honor," you mumble.

"The sentence?" Satan, your accuser asks.

"The wages of sin is death," explains the judge, "but in this case the death has already occurred. For this one" – pointing to you – "died with Christ, my Son."

Satan is steaming mad, but what can he say? He's been bested. He lost. All his accusing comes to nothing. And you are jubilant. You realize that since Satan cannot accuse you, no one can accuse you! No more dirty dishwater. No more penance. No more nagging sisters. You have stood before the judge and heard him declare, "Not guilty."

God has released you! Because He's given grace, you don't have to fear the guilt!

The next question we need to know the answer to is **4. The Question of ENDURANCE.**

"Can anything separate us from the love Christ has for us?" Romans 8:35

There it is. This is the question. Here is what we need to know. We need to know how long God's love will endure. Does God really love us forever? Not just on Easter Sunday when our shoes are shined and our hair is in place? We need to know how does God feel about me when I'm a jerk? Not when I'm peppy and positive and ready to tackle world hunger. Not then. I know how He feels about me then. Even I like me then.

I need to know how God feels about me when I snap at anything that moves, when my thoughts are in the gutter, when my tongue is sharp enough that my words could slice a rock. Nobody likes me then. I don't like me then. How does God feel about me then?

What we need to know is: Did I cross the line this week? Last Tuesday when I drank vodka until I couldn't walk ... last Thursday when my business took me where I had no business being? Did I drift too far? Slip too much? Go past the point where God can accept me?

That's what we need to know.

Can anything separate us from the love Christ has for us?

Thank God, He answered our question before we asked it.

He saw us before we were born. And He loved what He saw. From the beginning of time He promised to make you His child. Back then, He knew that would turn and walk away, but He vowed to provide you a way back to Him.

And to prove it, He did something extraordinary. He stepped down from His heavenly throne, and the Maker of the universe took on human skin. The God of everything became a tiny human baby and was born in a cow's stall – and lived for you.

You wonder how long God love will last? Find your answer on a rocky hill where a splintered cross once stood and Jesus died there. Look closely at that cross. That's God who is up there on it! Your Maker! That's your God who is hanging from nails holding His body to the grimy wood. That's your God bleeding, covered in spit, and soaked in your sin. That's your death He's dying.

And, ... that's His resurrection that you are living today. That's how much He loves you!

Will God's love for you last? Will it endure? YES! Can anything separate you from the love Christ has for you? The answer is NO! NO! God's love *WILL* endure. You can bet your life – and Jesus' life – on it!

Friends, those are the questions that only the Bible, Scripture, can answer. And God's answers are more relevant to our daily lives than we can fully understand.

You see, **The GRACE of God is always relevant!** For all people, of all times, the grace of God is relevant. And that's why we want to always grow in this grace. We want to – and *need* to – grow in learning more and more of God's loving ways!

What you always needed to know, God has answered. That's why you can stake your future on these triumphant words:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, we'll be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39 **AMEN.**

