Message for THE LORD'S DAY MORNING, January 15, 2017
Christian Hope Church of Christ, Plymouth, North Carolina
by Reggie A. Braziel, Minister

Message 1 in “Knowing The Living God" Series

“Knowing The Living God”
Colossians 1:9,10 NKJV

Please open your Bibles to Colossians chapter one. And let’s read verses 9,10.

Colossians 1:9,10 (NKJV)

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Before we get into today’s message, let’s go to the LORD in prayer.

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I want to ask you to close your eyes for just a moment and get a mental image in your mind of how you picture GOD.

**What Do You See?**

* Do you see an old, wise, grand-fatherly looking figure with white hair and a long-flowing white beard as pure as the driven snow?

* Or do you picture GOD seated upon a huge throne with the radiant light of His glory shining brightly all around Him?

* Do you picture GOD as an angry tyrant who is upset with you most of the time?

* Do you picture GOD as a strict disciplinarian who delights in punishing you every time you do something wrong?

How do you picture GOD?

OK, you can open your eyes!
On January 7, 1855 the minister of New Park Street Chapel in Southwark, England opened his Sunday morning sermon as follows:

“The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of GOD is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom the Christian calls his heavenly Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in contemplation of the Divinity. While the subject of GOD humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of GOD will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe.”

(KNOWING GOD by J.I. Packer, p.13, InterVarsity Press, Downer's Grove, IL, Copyright 1973)

In our scripture text that I read a few moments ago, Paul prays for his brothers and sisters-in-Christ in the Church at Colosse that “they might increase in their knowledge of GOD.”

That is my prayer for all of you here at Christian Hope Church of Christ this year. I pray that “all of you might increase in your knowledge of God.” And this is one of my own personal goals for this year as well. I want to grow in my knowledge and my love for GOD this year.

You see, it doesn’t matter if you have been a Christian for one year or one hundred years, all of us should continue to strive to know GOD more and more.

And so this morning I would like to begin a new series of messages that I have simply entitled: “Knowing The Living God.”
LORD WILLING, over the course of these next few Lord's Days we are going to discover many wonderful truths about our GOD, such as: Our God Is A Loving God.......And Our God Is A Faithful God....And Our God is A Merciful God.......And Our God is A Gracious God.......And Our God is A Forgiving God. and perhaps a few more of His wonderful attributes along the way.

In today's message I would like to lay the groundwork for this series, by looking at what God's word teaches us about KNOWING THE LIVING GOD.

First of all, the Bible teaches us that......

I. **GOD DESIRES FOR US TO KNOW HIM**

1. One of the saddest scenes in all the New Testament is in Acts 17 where Paul visited the ancient city of Athens. Everywhere Paul looked he saw countless images of the idols and false gods that were worshiped by the Athenians.

But the one monument that caught Paul's attention had these words inscribed upon it: “**TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.**” They knew Apollo, and Aphrodite, and Artemis. They knew Dyonisus, and Hermes, and Zeus. They knew all of the lifeless, worthless, meaningless gods.

But they didn't know **THE ONE, TRUE, LIVING GOD!** They didn't know JEHOVAH GOD, the Creator of the universe; the GOD of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. They didn't know the only GOD who matters! To them He was nothing more than a nameless inscription engraved on a marble monument.

Paul seized the opportunity to teach them all about this **UNKNOWN GOD.**
2. **GOD DESIRES TO BE KNOWN!** He doesn't hide Himself from man, nor make it impossible for man to know Him or find Him. Despite the fact that man is a sinful, imperfect, fallen being, GOD still desires for man to know Him.

3. Let me just share a few passages of scripture with you where GOD expresses His desire to be known.

   **Exodus 6:6-7 NKJV**
   Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. **Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God** who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

   **Proverbs 2:1-5 NKJV**
   My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding, If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; **Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, And find the knowledge of God.**

   **Jeremiah 29:13,14a (NKJV)** And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD,
4. I think it is fair to say that the vast majority of the people in the world today neither know GOD, nor have any desire to know Him. Most of this world's population seems content to live their lives from the cradle to the grave without ever getting to know the One who created them and gave them life.

But as God's children, it should be our earnest desire to increasingly grow in our knowledge of GOD.

This brings us to the next thought we want to consider and that is....... 

II. **HOW WE CAN KNOW GOD**

1. It only stands to reason that if GOD desires for you and me to know Him, He has taken the necessary steps to make it possible for us to know Him.

2. The scriptures teach us that GOD has revealed Himself to us in a number of ways.

   (A) First and foremost, we can know GOD through JESUS CHRIST.

   John 1:18 (NIV) No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is Himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.
John 14:7-9 (NKJV)

7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

It is absolutely impossible to know GOD without knowing Jesus Christ. In John 17:3 Jesus says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Jesus made the invisible GOD visible! Everything GOD desires for us to know about Himself He revealed through the incarnate Christ. When you look at how Christ interacted with man while He was here on earth, you see the very nature and character of GOD. Knowing God begins with knowing Christ!

(B) We can also know GOD through His CREATION.

Romans 1:20 (NKJV) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Psalm 19:1-4 (NKJV) The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
These verses I just read are telling us that creation has no language barrier. Everyone in the world from the most sophisticated aristocrat to the lowliest, uncivilized heathen can look at God's magnificent creation and know there is a GOD. Creation itself speaks a language that every human being can understand.

And creation has been a constant witness to God's glory.....and His majesty.....and His power.....and His existence from the beginning of time and it will continue to make GOD known throughout the world until He makes the new heaven and new earth.

**We can also know GOD through His **HOLY **SPIRIT.**

I Corinthians 2:11-12 (NKJV) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

The Holy Spirit helps us to know GOD in a number of ways. He assures us of God's forgiveness and salvation. He strengthens us in times of trial and temptation. He convicts us when we sin. He comforts us when we hurt, when we sorrow, and when we fail. He leads us and guides us down the paths of righteousness. And He teaches us the ways of the LORD.

The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to truths about GOD that we could never possibly know without Him.
We can also know GOD through THE SCRIPTURES.

I think it is pretty safe to say that every preacher and Sunday School teacher you have had over the course of your lifetime has encouraged you to develop a habit of daily Bible reading.

Reading your Bible is NOT about how many chapters you read each day or how much time you spend reading. Reading and studying your Bible is all about getting to know GOD.

The Bible is God's “love letter” to you and me. These are the very words that came out of the mouth of our Heavenly Father and Creator.

The Bible reveals God's will.....God's plan.....and God's purpose for your life and mine.

The Bible teaches us what GOD has done.....what GOD is doing.....and what GOD will do in the future.

When we read and study God's word we come to know God's nature......God's character......and God's attributes.

When you and I fail to read and study our Bibles each day in reality we are failing to get to know GOD as He desires for us to know Him. This is why Satan works extra hard to distract us and deter us from spending time in the word. To neglect the word of GOD is to neglect to truly know GOD.
3. Now let me make a critical point, so listen carefully. God desires for us to know Him. And God has made it possible for us to know Him through HIS SON, HIS CREATION, HIS HOLY SPIRIT, AND HIS HOLY WORD.

But we must understand there are no “short-cuts” to knowing GOD. We can’t just set our spiritual lives on “cruise control” and expect to grow in our knowledge of GOD.

GETTING TO KNOW THE LIVING GOD takes desire.....and discipline.....and diligence.......and time.......and effort....and commitment.......and perseverance.

4. And so the question I want to pose to you this morning is this: How much are you willing to invest in your relationship with GOD?

Before you answer that question, I would have you to consider....

III. THE BLESSINGS OF KNOWING GOD

1. For those who truly desire to know GOD and those who are willing to invest the time....effort.....and commitment it takes to know GOD there are countless blessings to be had.
(A) First of all, those who truly know GOD are blessed with POWER

Daniel 11:32b (NKJV) says, “But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”

Our highest calling in the Christian life is to know GOD. And the more we grow in our knowledge of GOD and the closer we get to GOD and the more time we spend with GOD the stronger we become in our faith.

Whenever you are around Christian men and Christian women who truly know GOD you can sense an extraordinary strength, and courage, and confidence, can't you. They seem undaunted by life's trials and troubles. They seem fearless in the heat of life's battles.

That power.....that strength.....that courage.....that confidence can be yours' if you will truly seek to know GOD with all your heart!

(B) Secondly, those who truly know GOD are blessed with PEACE.

II Peter 1:2 (NKJV) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our LORD.”

What Peter is saying is that both grace and peace can be multiplied or “increased” in the believer's life by growing in one's knowledge of GOD.
Listen up all of you who constantly fret and worry! Listen up all of you who are always anxious, and stressed out, and up-tight all the time. If you want to truly know peace; if you want to calm your nerves and soothe your spirit you don’t need a glass of wine or a “chill pill” you need to grow in your knowledge of GOD.

ILLUSTRATION: The other night I was lying in bed wide awake at 3:00 in the morning because I was totally stressed out about a situation in my life that is out of my control.

And as I lay there I remembered Philippians 4:6,7....... where Paul says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to GOD, (now listen) and the PEACE OF GOD, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

I probably repeated those verses over and over again at least five or six times, and before long I was sound asleep.

You see, knowing that my GOD was in control of a situation that was out of my control gave me a total sense of peace in my mind and my heart.

That is just another blessing we receive when we grow in our knowledge of GOD.
Thirdly, those who truly know GOD are blessed with PURPOSE

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love GOD, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Probably everyone of us has wrestled at times with this question: “What is the meaning and purpose of my life?” Or simply, “Why am I here?”

Apart from GOD life has no meaning or purpose. Apart from GOD there is no hope and no future. But when we grow in our knowledge of GOD we come to realize that our life here on earth does have meaning and purpose.

Our purpose is to bring glory and honor to GOD by serving, loving, and caring for others; and in so doing to become more like Jesus Christ.

Do you want POWER? Do you want PEACE? Do you want a sense of PURPOSE? Grow in your KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!

CONCLUSION

The late H.G. Wells was never known to be a religious man, but after he had studied the history of the human race and had observed human life, he came to an interesting conclusion: "Religion is the first thing and the last thing, and until a man has found God and been found by God, he begins at no beginning, he works to no end. He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties, his scraps of honor. But all these things fall into place and life falls into place only with God."

Do you truly know GOD? TRUE LIFE begins when we come to know GOD, and knowing GOD begins when we come to know JESUS CHRIST as our Lord and Savior. If you are outside of Christ, why don’t you come to JESUS today!