

**Text: John 17:1-3**

**Title: “The Mission ... Know Christ”**

**RE:VISION VIDEO** - The Re:Vision process is intended to help our church refocus on the mission of Jesus. The process is moving along very well. On January 31 we will have an evening for us to come together to share some of the things the Strategic Leadership Team has been working on to get your feedback. Yesterday the team had an anointed time of sharing about our worship services and we look forward to presenting a recommendation to the church related to that. So continue to pray. We're focusing on...

**THE MISSION ... Why are we still here?** Why doesn't God just take us to heaven once we're saved? Stop to think about what is it that we can do here on earth as God's people that we will not be able to do in heaven with greater joy and intensity? Worship? We will worship in heaven like we can never imagine here. Study our Bibles? We will be in the unceasing presence of the personal, living Word, Jesus Christ. Pray? Every second of eternity in heaven we will commune with God face-to-face. Fellowship with other believers? In heaven we will have rich fellowship more than we could ever imagine here on earth. So why are we still here? What is it that we can do here now that we will not be able to do there then? The answer: Proclaim the Gospel to lost people who need to know Jesus Christ. There will be no lost people in heaven; it is for the redeemed. God has left us in this world so that we might carry on the mission of Jesus to glorify God by proclaiming the Gospel to non-believers. That's why we're still here. He is our mission. His mission is ours.

The Strategic Leadership Team has examined the NT and have come up with this statement to keep us focused on Jesus' mission for us in this way: **KNOW ... FOLLOW ... SHARE JESUS CHRIST.** Over the next few weeks I want to explain this God-given mission in more detail. But for it to become a reality, not just a motto or a slogan in our church, I want to ask you to join me in praying this one prayer every day, for yourself, for your family and for our church.

### **ONE PRAYER**

**Lord Jesus Christ give me ...  
... a hunger to *know* You intimately  
... the faith to *follow* You fully, and  
... a passion to *share* You fearlessly.**

We have no other purpose for existence as a church. If we are not lashed to this mission, we are nothing more than a country club of religious people who get together for their own enjoyment.

Open your Bibles to John 17:1. Jesus clearly understood His mission in this world ... why the Father sent Him from heaven to this earth. And He never wavered from that mission. And in the last hours of His earthly life Jesus reflects that in His praying to the Father. **Read John 17:1-3.**

What a privilege to listen in on the Son's prayer to His Father. Jesus prayed about the accomplishment of the mission the Father gave Him. His concern was for the glory of God. Then He prayed for His disciples, those who would be the first to carry on His mission. Then He prayed for you and for me. Yes, He saw forward through time to those of us who would believe the message of the apostles and the Gospel and be saved. Jesus prayed for our security, our joy, our unity and our future. And what hope that gives to us!

Just look at how Jesus begins His prayer.

**John 17:1 - After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you."**

This is the pivotal moment of eternity. He said, "the time has come." Jesus lived every minute of His earthly life on the Father's timetable. And He was about to fulfill His purpose by offering Himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. When Jesus asked for the Son to be glorified He was asking that in the death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of the Son the Father would be glorified. What, from man's perspective, looked like a shameful defeat at the Cross, was the most glorious achievement in history. Now eternal life would be available to sinners who put their trust in Christ.

**John 17:2 - For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.**

God made a promise to His Son and gave Him authority to grant eternal life to those who would believe on His name. By His death and resurrection Jesus alone has the authority to bestow eternal life on those who believe. It is only through Christ that eternal life is received ... not in Mohammed or Buddha or any other person. And next Jesus announces what this eternal life really means.

**John 17:3a - Now this is eternal life...**

Now how would you finish that statement? We might say that eternal life is having our sins forgiven. And that's correct. We might say that eternal life is living for eternity in heaven with God. And that's correct. But notice how Jesus describes eternal life.

**John 17:3 - Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**

Yes, eternal life is a *quantity* of life ... life that goes on forever. But it is more than that. It is a *quality* of life ... a relationship where we truly know God and His Son Jesus Christ ... and He knows us.

The word "know" means not just intellectual knowledge, but a deep, intimate relationship. For example, you may know about Donald Trump; but most of us don't know him like we know our

parents or our spouse or our brother. When we know Christ we live in Him and He lives in us. His peace is our peace. His power is our power. His joy is our joy. His love is our love.

It is not enough to believe in God. The Bible says that the demons believe in God and they tremble. It's not even enough to serve God. Jesus says that there will be many people who are surprised when they stand before Christ in the end. They may say, "Jesus look at what we did for you. We prophesied and cast out demons and worked miracles." And Jesus will say, "Depart from Me. I never knew you." It's about a relationship.

And in this last night of Jesus' earthly life He was determined to finish the mission the Father gave Him ... to give this eternal life to all who would trust in Him. And His mission is our mission ... to know Christ and to make Him known.

Now when we talk about knowing Christ we're talking about...

## **1. THE INITIAL EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST**

We're familiar with this. When we talk about when we were saved we often talk about when we came to know Christ. That's what Paul was talking about when he reviewed his old life as a religious professional. He realized that knowing Christ in the gift of salvation was greater than any religion.

**Philippians 3:8 - What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...**

**Philippians 3:9 - and (to) be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.**

You see, the only way sinful humans can have a relationship with a holy God is for God to deal with our sin problem. So Christ came to die to pay the penalty for our sin, but also to become our righteousness. So when the Father looks at us He sees the righteousness of His Son, not the filthy rags of our sin. So our first concern in life better be to make sure that we know Christ. And after that we want to make sure that others around us know Christ.

But there's more. It also means...

## **2. THE INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCE OF A DEEPER INTIMACY WITH CHRIST**

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is...

**Philippians 3:10 - I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.**

Now this is the Apostle Paul, the most famous Christian to ever live. He had already written a huge part of what we have today as the NT. How could he say, "I want to know Christ"? Paul, don't you already know Christ? He would say, "Yes, but then you can know Him more and more and better and better." It has to be a life-long quest for us. I've been a Christian for nearly 50 years. I didn't realize until I was a young man that it was possible to grow deeper in love with Jesus. And with every year I get to know Him better and better in a deeper relationship.

Now how do we intentionally grow in deeper intimacy with Christ? Remember that it's a relationship. And all relationships grow through communication. If you're married, you grow in deeper intimacy with your mate as you talk to and listen to one another. The same thing is true in knowing Christ. It is through our continuous exposure to the Word of God that we hear what He has to say to us. And it is through persistent prayer that we speak to Him about what's on our hearts. And as we have this two-way communication of listening to God and talking to Him our intimacy with Him grows deeper and deeper. And this love relationship flowers in our personal worship where we express our love and praise to Him. And then that personal worship is blended with the worship of others in congregational worship.

That's how intimacy grows. And if you are not feeling an intimate relationship with God I challenge you to start by looking at your habits of Bible study, prayer and personal devotion. You will never have a growing, deep intimacy with God apart from that.

And from this deeper intimacy with Christ we come to be more like Him. So to know Christ means...

### **3. THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF A TRANSFORMED LIFE**

To know God is to be changed and transformed by God.

**Colossians 1:10 - And we pray ... that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,**

The more you know the Lord the more you become like Him. And as a church we must be accountable to one another to live a life worthy of the Lord, bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of the Lord.

**1 John 2:5 - But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:**

If you're not becoming more like Christ every day your relationship with Him isn't what it should be. But there's another way this knowledge of God relates to others. It means...

### **4. THE RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF SACRIFICIAL LOVE FOR OTHERS**

To know Christ is our shared goal as the people of God. Ephesians 4 talks about how we are to relate to one another in the church, exercising our spiritual gifts...

**Ephesians 4:13 - until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

This is not just a personal quest; it is a congregational quest. We're to grow up together. To know God means we will have a different relationship with others who know God.

**1 John 4:7-8 - Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

We have an implementation team that is working on strategies for making disciples. And we know this. We grow in the context of Christ-centered relationships. It's not enough for you to come and sit in a worship service and not develop relationships with other believers. You need to be in SBS class or small group. It's through those relationships that we know the transforming love of God together. When our church literally pulsates with the love of Jesus Christ flowing through Christ-centered relationships we won't have trouble attracting and keeping members.

There's one more facet of knowing God and His Son Christ. It means...

## **5. THE ETERNAL EXPERIENCE OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST**

Eternal life is a *quality* of life. Jesus said, "I have come that they may life and have it to the full." But it is also a *quantity* of life ... a life that goes on forever. As sweet as it is to know Christ today, there will come a day when we see Him face-to-face and our relationship will finally be complete. The Bible says that now we're looking at a reflection of Him in a mirror. But then we will see Him face to face. But then we will know Him as perfectly as He knows us. And we are finally home.

**John 17:3 - Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**

Do you know Christ? Are you making Him known?