

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 17/4/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you? I am thankful the way God makes each of us and gifts us to one another that we might be a loving community to his praise.

Today is final encouragement in John 17 with “Jesus Makes God Known” after that we move onto church matters.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Jesus makes God known

Does the world know God? There are many people and religions that lay claim to God. Judaism and Islam both are strongly monotheistic and claim it is only through their religion you can know God. Hinduism claims their many deities are all part of the one God. Many Australians say they believe in God, but he is distant and non-involved and does not judge them. But none of these know the true God. There is only one way to know God, and that is through Jesus and how he reveals God. In John 17 he writes:

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made your name 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.”

John 17:25-26

Jesus in his prayer says, the world does not know the Father. As much as any other religion or person might want to claim God, they do not know him. Without Jesus as he is found on the pages of Scripture, all they are left with is at best a distorted picture of God. There is no saying, “We all worship the same God.” A number of years ago, Penrith Council held a meeting where they presented a statement to all religious leaders in the area, that in effect pushed for a unity implying we all followed the same God. They had everyone speak about what such a statement meant to them. On my turn, I had to stand up and say why I could not in good conscience sign that document. It is not popular to say to people, unless you trust Jesus and know him then you do not know God.

Jesus is the one who makes the Father known, because he is the eternal Son with the Father from before time. The Father sent the Son into the world out of love to bring people to him. So we see it is Jesus who makes the Father known, he reveals God’s “name”, that is, all who he is, his glory, his love and the great depth of his character. He reveals God to all who trust in him and follow him. Knowing God here is more than knowing about God, it is enjoying God through what Christ has done. It is experiencing a relationship with God and seeing his work in the world.

The reason Jesus makes the Father known is that we might grow in his love. We might know the vast extent of his love he has given us in the cross when Jesus the Son died for us. It is only when we understand the cross that we begin to grasp God's love. It is only when we trust in the cross that we experience his love in forgiveness and mercy. This is a love that continues relentlessly towards his people as Jesus through the Spirit lives among his people.

Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17 finishes on a note of eternal enduring love for all those who believe in him through the message of the gospel. If you have not trusted in Jesus, then you do not truly know his love and I urge you to turn from your sin and living life your way, and turn to Jesus to trust in his love displayed in the cross. If you do trust in Jesus, continue to practice that faith so you might know his love in increasing measure. Continue to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin and look towards the work of the Spirit in you to transform your lives to know the great depth of God's love for you in Christ.

As always, love and prayers,
Steve