

Do You Know Him Sermon Notes

These sermon notes have been compiled by a small team of local church leaders to support a ten week sermon series that we hope will be used to equip local churches for the #doyouknowhim initiatives. these notes are a variety of lengths, and come from some different perspectives. They are offered as a gift and a starting place rather than a prescriptive syllabus. Please feel free to use or not as is most helpful to you. We have also produced a set of notes for Small Group Leaders, designed to help small groups explore these ideas and passages further.

This table describes the overall series. The highlighted passage is the focus of the small group material for that week.

Date	Festival	Theme	Old Testament	Gospel	Epistle
18/4/2021		Human and Divine	Genesis 1 :1-5	John 1:1-14	Philippians 2:5-11
25/4/2021		Shepherd	Psalm 23	Luke 15:1-10 (11-32)	Hebrews 13:15-21
2/5/2021		Crucified	Isaiah 53:1-12	Mark 15:21-41	1 Corinthians 1:18-25
9/5/2021		Raised	Jonah 1:17-2:10	Matthew 28:1-20	1 Corinthians 15:12-19
16/5/2021	Ascension	King	Psalm 93	Luke 24:44-53	Ephesians 1:15-23
23/5/2021	Pentecost	Jesus With Us	Ezekiel 37:1-14	John 15:26 - 16:15	Acts 2:1-21
30/5/2021	Trinity	Son of God	Isaiah 6:1-8	John 3:1-17	Romans 8:12-17
6/6/2021		Provider	Exodus 16:11-18	Matthew 15:29-39	Acts 14:8-20
13/6/2021		Revolutionary	Isaiah 58:6-12	Luke 4:14-21	Acts 4:32-37
20/6/2021		A Choice	Deuteronomy 30:11-20	Luke 8:1-15	Acts 8:26-40

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Week 1: Do you know Him? Jesus is Human and Divine.

Readings: Genesis 1 :1-5 John 1:1-14 Philippians 2:5-11

John has no idea that others are writing accounts. He is deliberately beginning the New Testament story of Jesus as the Old Testament begins the story of God – He wants us to draw parallels- he wants to see that we are talking about the same God.

Genesis – God- the creator – his word does the creating- his Spirit has been brooding over the waters – 3 elements of God involved with creation... and John is reiterating the idea that there is no division between knowing Jesus and Knowing God (And the Word Was God vs 1 and later...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father John 14:9) Anyone who says that at no point does Jesus claim to be God has never carefully read the gospel of John.

From the outset and right through the gospel John leaves the reader in no doubt that Jesus cannot be pigeonholed as merely a wise teacher, gifted healer, miracle worker, courageous leader or any of the other things that are true about him. John is determined to convey that who this person is is the fullness of God encased in a regular human body. How is this possible? No idea!.. What is certain is that our human brains and bodies cannot compute the idea of a being outside of time and space who is capable of bringing a universe into being. So if God has designed a particularly advanced species of mammal with the cognitive, emotional and spiritual capacity to have relationship with God, then for that God to be correctly understood he must communicate in a way that us mere humans can understand. (Here refer to Philippians passage) The logic is there- (indeed the Greek word translated here as “word” is LOGOS from which the word logic comes)

There is no difficult hidden meaning here.... But the audacity to tell such an outrageous story in a time when to claim higher authority than Caesar is to court hostility- even crucifixion – would be an exceptionally stupid thing to do. And yet these stories and eyewitness accounts keep coming out of Judea of this man who can walk on water, raise the dead, forgive sins and experience resurrection. It leaves us with an extraordinary challenge. Can we risk ignoring an encounter with God himself who has come in human form in an attempt to rescue us from the harm that we humans seem to not help but inflict on ourselves, each other and the environment around us. Could it be that there is more than just this physical, scientifically observable reality which our 5 senses can detect- could there be another dimension that we cannot observe with our senses, but that we can come to appreciate through faith.

So what to do.. Either this is such an incredible preposterous notion that we dismiss it out of hand.. or else see it as an invitation to come on a journey of wonder and intrigue that may lead you to discover the same wonderful truth that has transformed the lives and hopes of millions across the globe over 20 centuries. Come and discover that not only does god exist, but that he is alive, and at work in this world and that you can come to know him.

Week 2: Do you know Him? Jesus the Shepherd.

Readings: Psalm 23 Luke 15:1-10 (11-32) Hebrews 13:15-21

One of the challenges of speaking of Jesus as shepherd is that few of us are, or even know, shepherds. In Biblical times, every other person was a shepherd – and everybody would have known what made a good one.

So, what are the attributes or characteristics of Jesus that the metaphor of shepherd communicate, and how do we draw them out?

From the Luke reading we might pull out Jesus' care for each one, his persistence in searching for the lost, and his joy and celebration in finding the one who was lost. From the Psalm, we might highlight God's provision, protection, and permanent care. The juxtaposition of the two might also lead us to explore the continuity of God's shepherding and Jesus' shepherding and what that says about Jesus' divinity. The Hebrews passage might also provide some insights into this – along with some guidelines for own behaviour in the light of Jesus being our shepherd.

Having explored what it means that Jesus is the shepherd, we can then explore our own reaction to that shepherding. Some will find great relief and comfort in the idea that someone is looking for them, and looking out for them. But what about the discipline and medical treatments that a shepherd administers to the flock? We like the idea of the shepherd's crook beating off the wolves, but aren't always so keen on finding it around our own neck, pulling us back on course or away from things we want to do.

Week 3: Do you know Him? Jesus the Crucified.

Readings: Isaiah 53:1-12 Mark 15:21-41 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Both this week and next week we face the challenge of preaching on the crucifixion and the resurrection not long after Easter. We were aware of this when putting the series together, but felt that they were too important as elements of understanding who Jesus is, to miss out.

So, it is from the perspective of the question, “Do You Know Him?” that we approach these familiar passages today.

Isaiah shows us someone who is, in human terms, unattractive, despised, rejected – pierced and crushed. Do we know this Jesus? Why are all the actors who play him so handsome, and many of the artworks depicting him so beautiful if this is how Isaiah portrays Jesus crucified? Does an inadequate appreciation of this aspect of who Jesus is prevent us seeing his image in those around us who are unattractive?

Mark describes a number of people who encountered Jesus on the day of his crucifixion. You may want to explore the experiences and consequences of that encounter from the perspectives of Simon, the crowd, the soldiers, the religious leaders, and those crucified with Jesus.

Looking back on Jesus’ cross, Paul, in his letter to the Christians in Corinth, draws out a surprising characteristic of Jesus that is revealed in the cross. His foolishness in the world’s eyes. Do we know Jesus as the foolish and weak one, whose foolishness and weakness is wiser and more powerful than any other human being? What does this mean for us as we encounter him and follow him?

Week 4: Do you know Him? Jesus the Risen One.

Readings: Jonah 1:17-2:10 Matthew 28:1-20 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Following on from last week's notes, we approach these passages from the perspective of the question, "Do You Know Him?"

In his conversations with the Pharisees Jesus himself identified Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish as a pattern, type or foreshadowing of the experience he was to have of death. The most important aspect the Jesus draws out is the idea of a sign. There is a variety of opinions as to exactly what the sign of Jonah is, but that consideration is secondary to what the sign points to. It is less important whether a sign is made of metal or wood, the important thing is the information it gives or the direction it points. In this psalm like song in the middle of the book of Jonah we see him in the darkest place, pointing toward God his rescuer, the one who would bring him out of his "death" just as God brought Jesus out of his death.

The gospel reading this week again gives us the opportunity to consider the encounters of those who met with the risen Jesus. In verse 9, as the women encounter him, they know him and worship him. As so often his first words are, "Do not be afraid" and then he commissions them to go and tell his other disciples to meet him, they are the apostles to the apostles. Do we know Jesus as the one who calls out our worship, who calms our fears, and who sends us to others to invite them to meet him? In verse 17 we see a mixture of emotions, of faith and doubt. We can be real about the fact that we often see this mixture in our own hearts and minds. From verses 18-20 we often focus on the commission given to us, but today our focus is drawn to the two aspects of who Jesus is that surround this commission. He is the one who has received all authority and he is the one who will be with us always. It is knowing Jesus as the one who is with us and who has the authority that enables us to fulfil the commission we are given.

Last week, from the beginning of Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, we read him talking about the cross, and this week, as we come to the end of the same letter we find him teaching about the resurrection. More accurately, he is describing what we would lose if the resurrection had not happened. Taking a shadow reading of this, we can draw out what he sees as crucial to the Christian faith of knowing Jesus as the Risen One. It is knowing Jesus in his resurrection that our preaching is effective, our faith is strengthened, our witness is true, we are rescued from our sins, those who have died in Christ are secure, and our hope in Christ is well founded.

Week 5: Do you know Him? Jesus the King. (Ascension)

Readings: Psalm 93 Luke 24:44-53 Ephesians 1:15-23

When preparing to preach on this passage, a good starting point may be to read carefully through Luke 22 – 24 in several versions. Then to pick up the account of these events, read in Acts 1 & 2. This will allow for a sense of the flow within Luke's writing. It is important to have read the related passages in Psalm 93 and Ephesians 1, with their related themes of the majesty of the Lord, and Paul's intercession for the church.

Introduction:

Here Jesus speaks to His followers for the final time in His earthly ministry. While this is Jesus' final parting, it is not the end! Jesus' rule and His kingship is ongoing. It is worth remembering that the events of the past few years, and more particularly, the last few days, have been momentous for Jesus and His followers. Jesus has preached and healed and travelled with His message that He calls good news. This led to Him having many followers, but also upset all sorts of people and eventually led to His death by crucifixion. Just when everything seemed to be lost, Jesus rises from the dead and is seen by individual people and by groups. This passage is one of those resurrection appearances.

Jesus leaves His disciples with words of encouragement and instruction.

The Final Phase: An Appearing and a Leaving.

(The preacher/s may want to put this section into three points, hence what follows, but what is here can have momentum without doing so. It is really up to individual preference after prayer. If you wish to have three point plan of explanation, what follows is a suggestion.)

1) This is Jesus' final resurrection appearance, the last phase of His earthly ministry before being taken up into heaven. It is also a remarkable evidence of His divinity – in that He, the king, ascends into heaven.

2) Jesus' words bring a conclusion to His earthly life and teaching, and He does so by putting all that is going on:

Within God's mission – for a radical lifestyle based on God's forgiveness.

Showing that this was something that God promised in the past and was recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Highlighting Jesus' life, death and resurrection as being central to this.

Showing how Jesus' rule and His kingdom are different to those of this world.

3) Central to this also is the promise of a future existence in an encounter with God. The disciples had to wait for this to unfold. (See Acts 2: 2 – 4.) They are waiting for the return of the king.

Conclusion.

Two different concluding approaches are offered here. They are not that different, but this does allow for the preacher/s to choose how best to fashion the conclusion for their audience. So ...

One approach is to draw attention to the fact that it is worth noting...

How Jesus sees God: that God is thoroughly involved with humanity and has a plan, a mission to achieve this under His guidance and rule.

How Jesus sees His disciples: as being integral to the present, and to the future, in their walk with God: this is an essential part of His Kingdom.

How Jesus encourages His disciples to live expectantly within God's promise – which is the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, you might wish to draw attention to the following way of concluding the sermon...

Jesus calls for an expectant obedience, of subjects before their king.

Jesus' resurrection and ascension require an awareness of His human and supernatural involvement with humanity.

Jesus' activity leads to His followers experiencing a worshipful and focused lifestyle, even in difficult times! (This is a situation of adopted servant worshippers and disciples.)

The comfort and the challenge offered at this point, by the preacher, is of their own choosing. The context should be the fact that Jesus is the king in God's rule.

Week 6: Do you know Him? Jesus with us. (Pentecost)

Readings: Ezekiel 37:1-14 John 15:26 - 16:15 Acts 2:1-21

Introduction

This outline is written from within a 20th Century Christian tradition called Liberation Theology, which originated in Latin America. This approach sees that...

God is not distant but is eager to save and empower His people. He is with us!

God is concerned about both individuals and structures within our world; with sanitation being important and a proper concern of a community of faith. He is with us in all things!

God is concerned when individuals and communities fail to keep His law; with this being called 'sin'. Sin is that is not managing to keep up with God's standards.

God encourages people to question and to seek what they believe to be right; and this includes issues relating to society and economics, as well as faith issues. He is with us!

God sees there to be evil and wrongdoing in individual lives, in economic and political systems, among cultures and shared perceptions.

God work from among the poor to affect one way of establishing His kingdom; change does not have to come from those in power.

It is important to keep hold of the fact that Jesus is speaking to a community of believers, and not just to individuals, with whom He is in the midst.

What's happening in this passage?

In this passage in John's Gospel, Jesus has gathered His followers around Him to prepare them for the time when He is not around any longer. As such this is still relevant for individual and communities of Christians.

15: 26 & 27 – Jesus, after explaining the relationship between His disciples and the wider world.

16: 1 – 5 – Jesus offers a warning of what is to come, and of how He will empower Christians.

16: 6 – 15 – Jesus promises the presence of the Holy Spirit as the best way forward.

In this way Jesus makes clear His ongoing commitment to His community.

A few considerations when looking at this section of John's Gospel.

Jesus' words and warning are not spoken to create fear, but to enable faith – to be among the lowly and the powerless, to be within the despised, does not mean that you are ineffective!

Such teaching could easily leave us fearful, but this is a case of being aware so as to be strong. Notice the promise - that the Holy Spirit is described as our helper, as one who comes along side individuals and groups.

Here Jesus is dealing with the values of His Kingdom. If Christian believers live these values, then there will be a reaction because 'salt' effects change. Even in difficult situations, this is positive in terms of how God operates!

Questions and issues for the preacher/s to consider using in the sermon.

Relating to 15: 26 – 27.

How easy is it to love with such a promise?

How do people feel about being able to point others to the truth?

Relating to 16: 1 – 4.

Why is it good news that God wants to warn His people?

How does this teaching from Jesus help the powerless to be strong?

Relating to 16: 5 – 15.

What might this concept of help' involve? (In Galatians 5: 16, this relationship with the Holy Spirit is described as a 'walk' – that is an active and ongoing participation.)

How does the idea of God as Spirit being involved with Christians, within their homes, places of work or whatever they are, help people to pray and to act?

Concluding ideas.

A focus: How does God help us to explore the reality of Jesus with us.

It might be good to challenge people to see God's values as an everyday reality in each other's lives?
There is comfort in this!

How do people keep a guard against their own cynicism and unbelief, so as to be able to walk in step with the Holy Spirit?

How would people like to pray so as to see the release of God's values?

Week 7: Do you know Him? Jesus the Son of God. (Trinity Sunday)

Readings: Isaiah 6:1-8 John 3:1-17 Romans 8:12-17

Who is Nicodemus?

- Nicodemus was wealthy (we can assume this because when Jesus died Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred weight (John 19 v 39), and only a rich person could do this.
- Nicodemus was a Pharisee. This is incredibly significant because the Pharisees took a pledge to say that they would obey every detail of every law. Removing even a single word was considered to be a deadly sin. To follow the law to the letter often meant making rules as part of interpreting the laws. Even something as simple as tying a knot on the Sabbath required much thought. This kind of thing was a matter of life and death to the Pharisee because they saw it as pleasing and serving God.
- It is surprising, then, that as a Pharisee who considered serving God in this way to be hugely important, Nicodemus would even consider having a conversation with Jesus.
- Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews, who dealt with anyone suspected of being a false prophet. Jesus would certainly have fitted into this category.

Why did he come at night?

- Being the respected Pharisee that Nicodemus was, it is a miracle that he went to see Jesus at all. It must have taken a great deal of courage and determination to overcome his prejudices and go to Jesus. It is possible that he thought that it was safer to visit Jesus under cover of darkness.
- It may also have been because the Rabbis thought the best time to study the law was at night when there was less chance of being disturbed.

Being born again can have three possible interpretations: -

1. From the beginning, completely.
2. It can mean again, for a second time.
3. It can mean from above, and so this would mean from God.

It seems that Nicodemus thought Jesus meant the second.

To a Jew, new birth usually meant a new family, leaving behind the old and clinging to the new. Being born again means beginning a new life. It is not about patching up the old one but about having a new purpose because we have been born from above. Jesus explains this to Nicodemus as he talks.

How does this affect us?

The Christian life should be about showing others that you are changed because of your faith in Christ. A physical birth is a painful experience but as a parent you do not stay in that moment, you rejoice in the beautiful living being that has been created and you get on with life.

Being open to the Spirit can be as difficult for us as it was for Nicodemus. When you think that you have got everything sorted and labelled in neat piles along comes Jesus who blows the breeze of the Spirit through your life. It may be as challenging for us as it was for Nicodemus, who was well respected in the community.

Encountering faith as a new birth experience may be a time of absolute exhilaration, when an individual can say that they were born again at a particular time. The danger is if we believe that our Christian life then focusses only on that moment and not on all that follows.

It could be that Nicodemus came to Jesus in the darkness looking for the light, maybe we recognise that the light of Christ needs to burn brighter in our own lives?

Week 8: Do you know Him? Jesus the Provider.

Readings: Exodus 16:11-18 Matthew 15:29-39 Acts 14:8-20

This week we encourage you to lead the congregation in an imaginative engagement with the Gospel reading. If you feel that this would be out of their (or your comfort zone) perhaps use these notes in your own sermon preparation, and see what the Holy Spirit shows you.

Start by praying to come to know and love Jesus better.

- Read the passage slowly, getting more familiar with it.

Imagine you have been on the road with Jesus for three days.

Imagine the warm wind and the dust that is being kicked up by those around you.

What kind of shoes would you have been wearing? What would the terrain have been like? Sharp stones, thorny bushes. How are your feet feeling? How is your body feeling? Do you feel it is worth the effort to still be out here? Why? Why not?

- Close your eyes and ask yourself: What do you see?

What does the Crowd look like? Excited?, weary?, expectant?

What kinds of people are with you? What are their ages?

And you see Jesus talking and healing? How is he looking? Tired? Happy?

He catches your eye. What are you feeling? What do you think He is feeling?

- Next ask yourself: What do you hear? What sounds of nature? What are the crowd talking about?

You hear Jesus. He says "I have compassion for these people"... what does that mean for you as you hear those words spoken to you?

- Then consider:

What do you smell? The crowd members close to you? The breeze coming off the lake. The food when it is handed to you.

And now to touch: What do you feel? What's the texture of your clothes? The food? Where are you in the scene? What are you sitting on? Is it hard or comfortable?

What do you taste? How does your mouth feel before the food is announced. How does this fish and bread change things?

- And now you've 'composed the scene', as Ignatius describes it, let it run in your imagination, allowing yourself to be drawn into whatever aspects seem attractive or interesting, trusting that this is God leading your imagination, taking you to deeper truths.

Week 9: Do you know Him? Jesus the Revolutionary.

Readings: Isaiah 58:6-12 Luke 4:14-21 Acts 4:32-37

God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom, and Jesus is the revolutionary who turns everything upside down. From the tables of the money changers in the Temple, to the blessings of the Beatitudes, Jesus challenges the established order and reverses the priorities of human hierarchies.

In doing this, he, as always, only does what he sees his Father doing. In the prophet Isaiah, we read of God's commission to the people of Israel in exile to rebuild in a new way when they go back to Jerusalem. We know from earlier in Isaiah that one of God's chief complaints against the people was their exploitation of the poor, the widow, and the foreigner. Now God gives them commands and promises that if they implement a revolutionary society then they will experience all God's blessings.

They didn't manage it. As Jesus begins his public ministry, he goes into the synagogue and reads from this section of Isaiah, and proclaims its fulfilment. Now the revolutionary King is here, and his kingdom is going to be built on these values.

We see the outworking of some of this in the early church, in our Acts reading. God's people held things in common, they were generous to each other, no-one was in need, because wealth was spread around. This is an example of the upside down Kingdom of God breaking through.

How have our lives been turned upside down by Jesus? Do we live by a recognizably different set of values to those around us? How are we following in Jesus' revolutionary footsteps?

Week 10: Do you know Him? Jesus the Choice.

Readings: Deuteronomy 30:11-20 Luke 8:1-15 Acts 8:26-40

The meaning of a parable can provide both revelation but also remain hidden from the listener. This will be dependent upon whether the listener is happy to simply enjoy hearing the story or if it encourages curiosity and a desire to dig deeper into its significance.

In setting an example to the disciples, Jesus went through the towns and villages, preaching and teaching. Following the telling of this parable, the disciples were inquisitive and wanted to know the meaning.

We could be described as being both the soil and the seed. God's word has been sown within each one of us so it's important that we care for and cultivate the ground of our hearts so that we can be transformed into God's likeness.

We are also like the living seeds of the Kingdom of God, being spread in the garden of the world.

The meaning of this story is generally cited as the following:-

- The seeds that fall on the footpath refers to the people who do not understand the message of Jesus.
- The seeds that fall on stony ground refers to the people who believe the gospel but they soon forget the message and when difficulties arise in their life, they lose their faith.
- The seeds that fall on thorny ground refers to people who hear the good news of the gospel and accept Jesus but the lure of the world and all that it promises becomes their primary concern. Giving up what they perceive as the pleasures in life prove to be too much of a challenge. They fail to point the way to Jesus and so are not fruitful.
- The seeds that fall on fertile ground represent those who were persistent in putting God first, they shared the good news and so reap the harvest for God. They are fruitful.

This indicates that when we hear the message of Jesus Christ, we have choices to make. Those choices are not always easy and can take us down a road we hadn't intended to go. When we turn our eyes fully towards Jesus he will sow seeds in our lives that are deep and strong and will bear much fruit as our desire to reveal the love, forgiveness and compassion of God grows within us and we long to share it with others.

The story, as Jesus intended, can be for the listener and the thinker but the thinker is the one who, as suggested previously, will find themselves digging deeper to reveal the hidden riches of the parable.