

## Intro

Good morning, we are back in the Gospel of Luke. Gradually making our way through this gospel that is full of eyewitness testimonies and accounts to give us a picture of who Jesus is.

Before we get to that, I want to know something: What kind of person are you when you need to make a decision? I also figured since we have combined our two services, there might be people who you don't know—so let's get to know each other. (Don't worry, I'm not going to make you talk to anyone). But let's play a get to know you game. I'll ask you to raise your hand if a certain prompt describes you and we will see who in here is similar to each other.

Raise your hand if

- When you know you are going out to eat, you have to look up the menu ahead of time
  - Or you just wait to look at the menu once you are there
- When you get a new appliance do you read the directions on how to use it?
  - Or do you just throw the directions away and just start guessing how it works?
- When you go on vacation or on a trip, who here likes having a detailed schedule/itinerary?
  - Who here wants just an open schedule and you'll decide what to do in the moment?
- Who here at the beginning of a month loves having a budget and knowing where all your money is going to?
  - Who here hates that and just wants to see what happens to your money naturally throughout the month?
- Who here has a spouse or a roommate who has been or would be answering these questions differently than you do?

Good, thanks for playing. Now you have some commonality to talk to each other after service.

I'm just curious what each of you are like. I'm asking you these questions because I want to gauge who really likes to know things. At the root of each of these questions is how much information do you need to know before making a decision? Are you someone who wants to know everything before you make a decision or are you someone who can make a decision without knowing a lot. I'm not saying one is better than the other. Each type of person has its own unique strengths and weaknesses.

I want to know more about you though. Is it okay if I go deeper? You don't have to raise your hands for this part:

- Are you somebody who feels like you need to know more about Jesus before you make a decision to follow him? Do you have a lot of unanswered questions that you want answers for before you even consider placing your faith in Jesus?
  - If that's you, I'm glad you're here. Keep on asking those questions. I might challenge you today, but I am glad you're here.
- Next question: Are you somebody who has been following Jesus for a while and now he is starting to feel boring? You've been coming to church and you've been reading your Bible but it all feels a little stale? Kinda like the sermons are predictable and Jesus is predictable. Like you know what to expect. In some ways you might not have a desire to learn more.

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- If that's you, I'm glad you're here. I'm not judging you, that is normal to experience seasons of that. Again, I might challenge you today, but I am glad you are here.
- Lastly, you might feel like neither of those describe you. That's okay because I'm glad you're here too. We're gonna dive into the Word together. You can pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to you in some way today and also for the people who relate to one of those first two groups.

Before I go on, let's pray and then we will open up God's Word.

Prayer: For the Holy Spirit to come and reveal his Word for us today.

### **Bible**

**Go ahead and open up your Bible to Luke 9:18-22. Page 919 in the Pew Bibles.**

Going old school and not having the passage on the screen, because I want to put these Pew Bibles to work. Share with someone next to you if you're comfortable. If you want to, you can also open up the Bible app on your phone or just google Luke 9:18-22—just don't get distracted on your phones.

### Set The Scene

This is shortly after Jesus feeds the 5,000 (which if you remember from last week it was more like 10-20 thousand). And he is getting more and more popular every day. Imagine if somebody today fed 10-20 thousand people with just a couple fish sandwiches. Word would spread like crazy. Everybody would want to check him out to see who he is and if he is the real deal. That is what's happening. Jesus is gaining popularity. He has crowds that would fill the upper deck of PNC Park following him. They want to know more about who Jesus is. That's where our passage picks up.

### The Crowds

Reading from verse 18:

18 While he was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

19 They answered, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back."

Things to note from these two verses

1. Jesus ALWAYS makes time to pray. Even though he is gaining popularity, he isn't doing anything on his own strength. He remains connected to the Father and the Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus spends more devoted time with his inner group of 12 disciples. His 12 disciples get to know Jesus and his plan and purpose more than the crowds get to.
3. **The crowds know that Jesus is someone special, but they don't trust their lives and salvation to him.**

Maybe that's where you are now. You know that Jesus must be somebody special. You might just think that he's a teacher. You might just think he's an influential person in history. But you aren't at

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the point where you can trust him fully yet with your life. You don't quite believe that he offers salvation. But you want to know more about who he is. [edit: add some more?]

#### The Disciples

As Jesus is having this conversation with the disciples, he gets personal with them. Jesus actually isn't interested in who the crowds say he is, he wants to know who the disciples believe him to be. Let's pick up the passage at verse 20:

20 "But you," he asked them, "who do you say that I am?"

Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

Things to note from this verse

1. Jesus makes it personal
2. Peter and the disciples know that Jesus is the one who has come to save them and they trust him with their lives.

Peter and the disciples were able to make a claim that the crowds were not making. Why were they able to do that? Is it just because they had more knowledge about Jesus? Or it is also something else? Hold that thought—we're gonna get to it later.

Let's look back at Peter's answer: Who do you say I am? Peter answered, "God's Messiah"

If we were there in person, I would want to take a timeout right here. I wish I could just freeze time. Freeze everybody else except for me and Peter and and ask him some follow up questions. Peter, what do you mean by God's Messiah? What do you expect Jesus to do as God's Messiah? Peter, tell me more? What do you mean by that?

If we were able to do that, do you know what we would find out: that Peter and the disciples even though they trust Jesus with their life, they don't know everything about him. They have wrong assumptions about him. They even have unanswered questions about Jesus. How do I know this? Because in the next couple verses Jesus is going to go on to explain and predict what he has to do as the Messiah and Peter is not having it. Peter trusts that Jesus is the Messiah but Peter does not know everything about Jesus. Peter finds out that he is wrong.

Reading from verse 21:

21 But he strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one,  
[because the world wasn't ready to truly know him yet]

22 saying, "It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day."

Peter expected the Messiah to come as this military leader who will free the Jews from Roman Captivity. He expected this victorious Messiah who will conquer Rome. He didn't know Jesus fully.

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Because here Jesus is saying that as the Messiah he is to be betrayed, rejected, killed and raised on the third day. That's what Jesus's plan was. Peter didn't know that though.

Luke does his boy Peter a favor here and doesn't include the embarrassing detail of Peter trying to convince Jesus not to do that. But lucky for us, Matthew wanted the whole world to know how Peter messed up. Maybe they had some beef or something. Either way in Matthew 16, we see this same account with a little more detail.

Matthew lets us know that after Jesus said this, Peter pulled Jesus aside and said "Uh that's not gonna happen—you're the Messiah" As if Peter perfectly understood God himself. A lot of know what happened next: Jesus rebuked Peter and said get behind me Satan!

It was painfully obvious how little Peter knew. As we continue in this season we will see more and more how the disciples messed up and didn't know everything. The question is, did Peter not have a life saving relationship with Jesus because he didn't know everything about Jesus? Was Peter's trust in Jesus not enough to save him because he didn't know everything?

Of course not. Peter doesn't need to know everything to trust Jesus with his life. Jesus's grace covers it all. Peter knows more than the crowd, but not everything. Peter is still committed to following Jesus as his Messiah even though he doesn't know everything.

Or another way to say this is that Peter has sufficient knowledge to place trust in Jesus as his Messiah even though he doesn't fully understand God. And that is okay. Not only okay, that is the reality for every person who has saving faith in Jesus. We are committed to following Jesus even when we don't know everything.

### Us Today

In her book, None Like Him, Jen Wilkin has a chapter on how we can have *sufficient knowledge* about God but at the same time how God can never be *fully known* and why that is a good thing. We actually get to find delight in discovering more about God. Listen to what she writes:

"God is incomprehensible. This does not mean that he is unknowable, but that he is unable to be fully known. It is the joyful duty, the delightful task of his children to spend their lives both this one and the next, discovering who he is...We take pleasure in working to grow in our knowledge of him..."

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But even with these declarations God cannot be fully known by humans. Christians have meditated on the nature and character of God for thousands of years. Volumes have been written about God, but their sum does not contain the fullness of his attributes. The human mind in its finiteness cannot fully comprehend or express an infinite God.

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Even the most intellectually gifted theologian will barely scratch the surface of understanding who God is. He is fully known only to himself. Put another way, the only expert on God is God.”

How amazing is it that God is so much greater than we are, that we will never be able to fully understand him. If your spiritual life feels dry now—remember there is so much about God that you do not know yet. There is still more to discover about him. There are still new ways to connect with him. All you have to do is ask. Ask for him to renew your spirit. Ask for him to reveal how little you know. Ask him to provoke awe and wonder and a worshipful heart for him.

Some of us get stuck in not knowing everything about him, but in reality it is a good thing. God is so unlike us, that he is worthy of worship. If he was just like us, he wouldn't be God. If we could understand him completely, he wouldn't be God. I know we always want answers, but sometimes we just need to marvel in the mystery. Like wow God, I am so small compared to you. I am unable to know everything about you but yet at the same time you would come to Earth and die on the cross for me. And that is amazing.

What's even better is that even though we won't know everything about who God is, we know enough to experience a relationship with him that changes our lives. Jen Wilkin goes on to write:

“Though God is not able to be fully known, he is able to be *sufficiently* known. What we can know about him from creation and the Bible is sufficient for our salvation and sanctification.”

Through God's Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit you can know what you need to know in order to declare him as your Messiah and savior and put your trust in him.

The knowledge that is needed that the Bible provides is:

1. You and me were made for a relationship with God but our sin broke us apart from God
2. Jesus is the Messiah who saved us in our sin and made a relationship with Jesus possible through his death on the cross and his resurrection 3 days later.

That is the sufficient knowledge we need.

If you are somebody who relates more to the crowds than to the disciples. Maybe somebody who has been here for a while or has heard sermon after sermon and you have heard all about Jesus but you still have unanswered questions. Somebody who feels like you need more answers let me tell you about the difference between the crowds and the disciples. How you move from being someone in the crowd who doesn't understand who Jesus is to a disciple who knows that Jesus is everything: It actually isn't more knowledge or answers—that's not what you need. What you need is the Holy Spirit to do a work in you and reveal who Jesus is.

The difference between someone in the crowd and a disciple is not that you all of a sudden know everything and have an answer to every question but the difference is that the Holy Spirit has opened up your heart to trust and follow Jesus with your life EVEN THOUGH you don't know everything. Let me say that again...

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It is okay to ask questions and search for answers. In fact that is encouraged! If you don't know a lot about Jesus, keep on searching for answers and asking questions. But what I want to communicate is that some of us gets stuck and expect to know everything before we make a decision to follow Jesus. It is okay if you don't know everything. That's part of the beautiful mystery of having a God so much greater than us.

### **Application Prayers**

I want to give you all 4 different prayers you can pray. (ALL DIFFERENT SLIDES)

Prayer 1: God, please show me who you truly are

Prayer 2: God, please help me trust and follow you even when I don't know everything

**WORSHIP BAND CAN COME BACK UP**

Prayer 3: God, please reignite our relationship by reminding me how much I don't know

Prayer 4: God, please help me to never lose the awe and wonder of who you are

This week, ask God for more of him.

To close, let me talk about one common fear we have. We are afraid to fully trust God without fully knowing him because we are afraid that we will find something we don't like about him. What if I discover something about him that is just bad and wrong,

Let me just tell you, that isn't who God is. We know from his Word that God is infinitely good. It is impossible to discover something wrong or evil within him. The more you discover about him all you will find is good things. To share one more Jen Wilkin quote, she reminds us of this:

"No doubt we will spend eternity enjoying an ever-increasing revelation of the things we do not know yet about God. Because he is infinitely good, the things we do not know about God are only good things.

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We cannot say the same of each other. If you were able to learn everything you don't know about me, you would learn both good and bad. We all have skeletons in our closets. In a sense, God has a closet filled with infinite secrets about himself, but it only contains priceless treasures, no skeletons.

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The secret attributes of God, should we come to learn them would bring us nothing but pleasure and assurance. The infinite unknown of God holds no faith-shattering duplicity, just a multiplicity of perfections waiting to be discovered across eternity."

It's okay if you don't know everything about God because all that is left to discover are good, beautiful things. Pray with me.