



59A PENTECOST 18A BIBLE STUDY

knowing who you are and where you are headed;
knowing Christ.

Abstract

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:4b–14

Jim de Jong
[Email address]

59A Pentecost 18A Bible Study

Knowing your goals; knowing Christ.

Sunday, October 4, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 22 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20

Psalm Psalm 19

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Isaiah 5:1–7

Psalm Psalm 80:7–15

New Testament Philippians 3:4b–14

Gospel Matthew 21:33–46

Philippians 3.4b-14

Paul sets out his credentials by citing the marks of his Jewish identity. Remaking his identity ‘in Christ’ is a big project that he has not yet fully achieved – but it is his ultimate goal.

This week's resources explore: knowing who you are and where you are headed; knowing Christ.

Welcome and opening prayer

A gathering prayer

Creator God, who calls us to follow,
we are on journeys,
individual journeys and shared journeys,
experiences that are ours alone and ours together.
Guide us on our journey this day
and help us to keep our eyes on the goal.

Amen.

Reading

Philippians 3:4b–14

^{4b}If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹and 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 on the basis of faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what

is ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.¹

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Exegesis

Paul sets out his credentials by citing the marks of his Jewish identity (vv.4-6) – he was once part of the ruling elite condemned in the passage from Matthew. None of that means anything to him any longer; in fact, it is a disadvantage and an identity he is willing to give up. Not that Paul ever shows any sign of turning his back on his Judaism; it is simply that what he has in Christ matters so much more, and is available to Jews and Gentiles alike. So, he stands firm against those who want Gentile believers in Christ first to become Jews. Faith in Christ is all that matters.

Faith in Christ, however, is a tough road. Paul doesn't want to claim too much for himself. He is striving towards the goal of resurrection from the dead, but not even he has secured it yet. Indeed, he is not able to reach the goal alone; it is only because 'Christ Jesus has made me his own' (v.12) that it becomes possible. Remaking his identity 'in Christ' is a big project that he has not yet fully achieved, but it is his ultimate goal (v.14).

Picture Pointers

What are the goals you are reaching for?

How does it feel to see heaven as a 'goal'?

What impact does 'knowing Christ' have on your identity?



Live your faith

Try to be aware of the different 'hats' you wear during your day (see If the hat fits). At the end of each day, think about whether you have worn any hat that fits the role of being a follower of Jesus. If not, think about how you might do so the next day.

End the session

We are who we are, Lord, and we know we get things wrong.

We also know we get some things right.

We are who we are and we know you love us.

Help us to follow the way you would have us travel.

God of one and God of all, we pray for:
those who don't know who they are,

¹ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

who can't understand themselves or their place in society
God of all, we pray for them.

Those who don't 'fit in',
who are or seem to be different –
God of all, we pray for them.

Those who don't know where they come from,
their heritage or home, their family or bloodline –
God of all, we pray for them.

Those who feel lost and isolated, confused and afraid,
rudderless or homeless, strangers in a strange land –
God of all, we pray for them.

Those who wish they were someone else,
or somewhere else, in some other time and place –
God of all, we pray for them.

In your great mercy, Lord,
hear our prayers and grant surer journeys for them all.
Amen.