

# KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



## Ephesians 1:16-23

*That You May Know Him Better*

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The disciples had the privilege of seeing Jesus do amazing things. He had healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed storms, and even walked on water. They had witnessed these miracles of Jesus. But they never saw him fly.

What do you think was going through the disciples' minds as they watched Jesus fly up into the clouds and disappear from their sight. It is not difficult to understand why they were staring into the sky when the angels appeared to explain what they had just seen. "What else can he do?" they must have wondered. Did they realize that Jesus was far greater than they could have ever dreamed. Moments before he flew back to heaven, the disciples were asking Jesus a very earthly question about establishing an earthly kingdom. And then, suddenly, he blessed them and flew away.

The disciples were confronted with the reality that during his time on earth, Jesus was just restraining his true power. So that he could carry out his work as the Savior, he set aside his glory and power. But at his Ascension, they must have realized that Jesus was far greater than they imagined.

Jesus wanted his disciples to have a deeper understanding of who he was. That is why he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would give them insight so that they would know Jesus.

In our text from Ephesians 1, Paul told his first readers what he prayed for them. He wanted God to give them **"the Spirit of wisdom and revelation."** And he had a specific reason: **"so that you may know him better."** Paul wanted Christians to understand the magnitude of Jesus' power. Isn't that what we want? Don't you want to know Jesus better?

On Ascension Day, we get to know Jesus better as we look at **"his incomparably great power for us who believe."** It is a power seen in the

fact that **"God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church."** Jesus ascended back to heaven with his church in mind. The incomparably great power that is at his disposal is used for your benefit.

*Knowing Jesus better* means that you realize that Jesus is far more powerful than the thoughts that can silently linger in our minds. Jesus is greater than our sins.

We try not to talk about them. You never post them on social media. You never answer someone who asked, "How are you?" by saying, "I feel guilty for the horrible lie I told my boss today." We don't admit that we use our anger to make those around us bow to our will. We don't admit that we are arrogant and proud and that we are right more often than most people realize. We don't admit when our offering to church was tiny compared to our income (but don't mind if others realize when we gave a big offering). We don't usually like to talk about our reasons for skipping worship or Bible Class. There are things about us that we want no one to know. And if they do know, we don't want to talk about it with them. We want people to think that we make one great decision after another and are the kindest person they know. But we know ourselves better than that.

*Know him better!* Jesus can do more than just heal people . . . and fly. The reason he hid his power and became human was so that he could save humans — including you. He ascended back to heaven because the work was done perfectly. Jesus has the power to fix your past with forgiveness. He claimed the power to forgive when he died on the cross. He took the punishment for sins. The reward — forgiveness — he hands out to all who believe in him.

*Knowing him better* means that we know the power of forgiveness. The past is fixed by the blood of Christ. Your forgiveness is real and

certain. God loves you; don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Jesus then takes that incredible power — forgiveness — and he plants it in your heart. The power to fix many of the hurts that you feel is found in forgiveness. As you have been forgiven by Jesus, so he calls on you to forgive.

Often, we struggle with this. So let's keep our eyes on the Savior and his great power. Look at him, not in fear that he'll unleash his anger on you if you fail to forgive; but look at his love for you. God exerted his power when he raised Christ from the dead. By Jesus' resurrection, you are set free from the tomb of your sins. They do not control you. Forgive because Christ has set your heart free from the misery of grudges and filled you with love.

Jesus' power fills you with love. It is a love that leads you to serve. In his great power God shaped you to be the person he wanted you to be. He gave you gifts and abilities and set you in a unique setting, surrounded by the ones who are your family and friends. The One who loved you enough to leave heaven for a time, calls on you to love people. Fight the urge to be selfish and thoughtless. Fight the urge to control others. Those people God put in your life are not there for your convenience. Jesus says the opposite; you are there to help them. The power of Jesus is at work in you. His life and death sets you free from the control of sin.

*Knowing Jesus better* means that we accept this new life with the confidence that God will bless us in it. You see, fear arises that if I forgive too much or too easily people will take advantage of me. If I spend too much time serving others, who will take care of me? I don't want to appear weak in the eyes of others, so I think I need to maintain some control over them.

*Know Jesus better.* You won't be weak or neglected. You will be like Jesus. He was not weak. He is the One who died and rose again. He flew back to heaven and now rules over all things. He is not weak! He rules all things for the

church — including you!; he's not going to leave you. His ways are the best ways! He wants you to forgive and love because he knows that is the path to real joy in life.

On the hard days or when the sin of another hurts the most, we are tempted to doubt his power. We are tempted to think we are all alone.

Jesus sent two angels to deliver an important lesson to the disciples gathered there in the vicinity of Bethany and the disciples gathered here. The Jesus who left is coming back. He's coming back to take us to be with him in heaven. He has not left us to suffer through our days as if this is all there is. He has prepared a place of perfection for us. His cross and resurrection mean that our admission ticket is punched.

On the hard days or the days when doing what is right is hard, look up. Look up to what your Savior has prepared for you. This place of trials and weakness is a temporary stop for us. Heaven is our real home.

*Know him better!* Jesus didn't come so you could rub a little religion on your life so you'd feel better about yourself. He didn't come so you could be optimistic about tomorrow. He came because his love for you does not have a limit. He came because his deepest desire for you is that you know him and spend your eternity with him.

Jesus' incomparably great power is at work in the world as he rules all things. Let his love assure you that he knows what he's doing as he guides the world forward with his church foremost in his mind.

Jesus' incomparably great power is at work in you as well. He has forgiven you. He has changed you so you can love. Most importantly, he has claimed you as his child. Get to know him better and your life will be complete. Amen.

Festival of the Ascension  
May 17, 2015

