

John 7:40-43. ⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Christ." Still others asked, "How can the Christ come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Get to know Jesus better

1. Listen to his words.

2. Listen to the words written about him.

There is an old saying that states, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." That certainly can be the case in number of different areas. We may all have our own stories of a do it yourself project that went terribly bad. Many of us can tell tales of work that we tried to do on our car or an appliance at home that would have been better handled by an expert; but we thought we knew enough. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." This can be the case in all sorts of things; it especially can be the case in spiritual matters. In our lesson for today we see an example of a limited and dangerous understanding of Scripture and spiritual matters, and we will see that there are certainly plenty of applications for us today.

And so today, on this first Sunday of the New Year, we are encouraged to make a resolution of sorts. We are encouraged to, "Get to know Jesus better". And the only way that we can really do that is if we listen to his words and listen to the words written about him. We were reminded on Christmas that Jesus is the Word made flesh. We know that all Scripture speaks about him; and so as Christians we will want to know more about Jesus, we will want to know more about his teaching and preaching. We will want to dig into his Word, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament and find out and learn about: who our God is, and what he has done to save us. We will want to get to know Jesus better by listening to his words.

Our lesson for today takes us on a swift jump from that little town of Bethlehem to the heart of Jesus' ministry. The Word that became flesh and was wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger was now a grown man who was preaching and teaching and performing miracles. The shepherds and even the magi were long gone, but now as he spoke others started to crowd around him. Some wondered out loud, if this man was indeed the promised Messiah, the long foretold Christ, whom God had sent to save the people. Some wondered if this was the Prophet, of whom Moses promised. ***The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15).*** Moses had promised that a great prophet, much greater than him, would come and speak the words of God and the

people were to listen to him. Jesus was the Christ, he was that promised Prophet. The people were to listen to him and to hear the voice of God and the very words of salvation that would come from his lips.

Well, as it turns out, a little bit of knowledge turned out to be a dangerous thing. Some knew to look for this prophet, but they did not pay much attention to Moses' plea to listen to him. Some just seemed to think that they had things pretty well figured out, and so instead of listening closely to what Jesus had to say, they listened only to a few things and then made up their own minds about who he was. They knew their Scriptures well enough to know that the promised Messiah would come from the house of David and that he would be born, as the prophet Micah had promised, in the little town of Bethlehem. And they knew Jesus, well enough - they thought - to know that he was Joseph's son, from a town in Galilee called Nazareth.

As we look back we can so easily see that both their reasoning and their understanding of Scripture were both so flawed. Those that immediately dismissed Jesus as the Christ because he was from Nazareth and not Bethlehem forgot to take into account a rather significant census that took place about 30 years ago. It was a census that would have taken place when Jesus would have been born. Instead of doing any digging or research they formed their own opinion based on what they had already decided to believe. They even grabbed hold of a portion of Scripture that they thought would strengthen their stance. Those that questioned how the Christ could be such a fixture in Galilee seemingly knew the prophecy of Micah about Bethlehem, but they conveniently forgot or overlooked Isaiah's promise that the light of the world would be revealed in this very region of Galilee. Isaiah wrote a very specific and quite important prophecy about the Christ and he spoke very clearly about the very place where Jesus was doing most of his preaching and teaching. ***In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.***

A little bit of knowledge was a dangerous thing. They thought they knew. They assumed they knew enough about the Scriptures. They assumed they knew enough about Jesus. But notice what they didn't do? They didn't really listen. They didn't really pay that close attention to the Scriptures, and they certainly didn't bother to pay very close attention to Jesus. In the verses leading up to this section Jesus talks to the Pharisees and the leaders challenging them to believe where he was truly from, he was from God. But they refused to believe. They were sure that they knew where he was from; they had their minds made up and they even sought to influence and quiet those might believe.

Yes, a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. It was the case back in Jesus' day. It is certainly still the case in our day and age. As the wonder and the joy of Christmas slowly start to fade away, we realize that our Savior wants us to continue to

stick around, so that we may know more about him. In faith we are glad to stare into the manger at this child born for us, but we must also realize that he wants us to continue to listen to his voice. He wants to grow in the faith. He wants us to follow his will, to listen to his teaching that comes from the Father. There is more to this story, more to him, and he wants us to know as much as we can. After all, he is the Word made flesh. He wants us to grow in our knowledge of his Word. He wants us to get to know him better, by listening to his Word, and learning about the words written about him.

However, there are quite a few people who are satisfied with taking a peek into the manger but then quickly they move on. There are quite a few people who bend down to peek into the manger but then they leave having formed their own opinion of Jesus. There are many who are willing to celebrate a little Christmas, but they are so many who are not so interested in sticking around to listen to his teaching. And so as we leave the little town of Bethlehem and journey with Jesus to Galilee and finally to Jerusalem, we may take a figurative look around at the world around us and soon realize that there is quite a divide concerning what people believe and practice concerning the teaching of Jesus.

There are those that search for contradictions in God's Word that would discredit Jesus and disqualify him to be the Savior, and that can have a negative effect on our faith. We might be tripped up by such arguments. We might scratch our heads and wonder. Our ears might be drawn to the critic rather than to the Christ. And a little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing, especially if we ourselves are not firmly rooted into God's Word and ready to fend off such criticism.

There are plenty of people still today who would take a portion of God's Word and misapply it to fit their own ideas about Jesus. There are plenty of people who would say that Jesus is so loving and compassionate that he would never speak against this sin or that sin. They ignore what Jesus has to say about marriage, they ignore what Jesus has to say about obedience, they ignore what Jesus has to say about repentance, because they have formed their own opinions about who Jesus is and what he came to do. Such opinions can sound very convincing, but we must listen to our Savior's voice and not just listen to what people are saying about him.

There are plenty of people who would say that Jesus was born into this world for us and died for us and that's all that really matters, Jesus would never be that concerned about differences in teaching or practice. We must remember how Jesus continues to shepherd us and how he warns us in his word us about the dangers of false teachers. He tells us to watch out for wolves dressed up in sheep's clothing. He tells us to watch out for them and keep away from them.

As we mill about in the crowds of today we cannot help but hear those who have formed such opinions of Jesus and it can easily affect us. It can be rather appealing to think that we may form our own opinions of Jesus as well, and sometimes we do. Sometimes we find it very convenient to remember that Jesus loves us and forgives us,

but we pay no attention to how he tells us to avoid this sin or that sin. We find it very convenient to pit one part of Scripture against the next to rationalize this poor decision or justify this sinful behavior. We may even find it rather easy to take a peek into the manger and perhaps come back to look inside the empty tomb and not really listen to too much else about Jesus.

Dear Christian, realize the wisdom in little saying, “A little bit of knowledge can be a dangerous thing”. This saying implies that a small amount of knowledge can mislead people into thinking that they are more expert than they really are. We are to watch out for that sinful pride in us that thinks it knows plenty about God when really we always have so much to learn. For if we think we know it all about God and his word how easily are we not tricked by our emotions or our rational minds into believing something that is not God’s word of truth because we think it unnecessary to double-check with God’s Word! If we think we know it all about God how easily it will be for us to become bored and complacent in our faith and fall prey to spiritual apathy and all the immorality and worldliness that so often walks hand and hand with spiritual laziness!

And so today, the Lord reminds us that it is very important to stick around after Christmas so that we may get to know him better. He is the Christ. He is the light of the world, the only way to be saved. He is the Savior that we needed and the great prophet that teaches us about our God and relationship with him. He is our brother who came into this world to be tempted in our place, to suffer for our sins, to die the death that we deserved. His love for us is so rich, his plan for our salvation is so layered in detail and love. His love for us is so extensive, so great that we can never explore all of it to its full extent, not even in an entire lifetime of study. So let us listen to him. Let us follow him from Bethlehem, to Galilee, and Jerusalem again and again. Let us not be swayed by the opinions that others form, but let us dig into the Scriptures and see how all of God’s Word points us to him. Let us learn of him and learn from him. He has so much to teach you. He is your source of knowledge and truth. He is the light to your path and he has much to say to you for your daily life and your walk with God. Let us marvel at this child born in Bethlehem and then stick around to discover again how he is the Christ, he is the Prophet who speaks God’s Word of truth, God’s Word of salvation. Above all, let us listen to his Word our whole life through, as we ever grow in our knowledge and love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.