

Known Unto God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's letter to the Philippians, Philippians chapter 4.

Philippians chapter 4, and I'd like to take as our text this morning the words of verse 6. And I'm going to read them from the authorized version, and you'll know why as we go through this text this morning.

Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6, where Paul says, Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

And particularly those last three words in verse 6, where it says, known unto God. Known unto God.

On a day like today, a day which is known throughout our nation, as we were saying to the children, it's known as Remembrance Sunday.

[1 : 1 6] And as you know, many people, they gather at war memorials and remembrance services to remember and to honor those who lost their lives in the horrors of war, both in the past and also in the present.

And I'm sure that many of us, we gathered earlier at a war memorial, either in Borv or Barvis or also in Braga, that we gathered to remember the fallen.

And as you know, it's good for us to remember the fallen. It's good for us to remember the millions of people who innocently suffered at the hands of the enemy. It's good for us to remember the men and women who were wounded and died on the battlefield in order to bring peace between the nations of our world.

It's good for us to remember those from our own villages who left the shores of our island never to return again. It's good for us to remember those who lost their lives on the Isolaire with the safety of home in their sight.

It's good for us to remember. It's good for us to remember and give thanks to the Lord for bringing us through one of the darkest centuries of our history. But you know, it's also good for us to remember and to pray for those who are still serving in our armed forces.

[2 : 3 4] It's good for us to remember to support those who are still experiencing the effects of war, both physically and mentally. My friend, it's good for us to remember, lest we forget.

Lest we forget. Because you know the truth is, we are prone to forgetting. We are prone to forgetting. And now over a century on from the end of the Great War, the First World War, our lives, as you know, they're very different.

We're all so busy. We're all rushing around. We're all trying to deal with the here and now. Our lives are so busy. There's so much on. There's so many demands upon us.

So many pressures. So much to do. So little time. And sadly, we forget. We forget the service and the sacrifice and the suffering that took place in the past in order to bring us peace in the present.

But you know, the same can also be said about Jesus. Our lives are so full, so busy, so hectic. We have little or no time for Jesus. And we forget.

[3 : 46] We forget about the service and the sacrifice and the suffering and the salvation Jesus procured and provided on the cross in order to bring us peace.

My friend, we so easily forget the greatest victory in human history. And it was a victory fought not by war, but by willing obedience.

The willing obedience of our suffering Savior. But what's remarkable is that Jesus knew that we would quickly forget about his service and his suffering and his sacrifice and his salvation.

He knew that we would quickly forget. That's why he instituted the Lord's Supper and gave that very simple instruction. Do this in remembrance of me.

Do this in remembrance of me. We are prone to forgetting. But you know, for a few moments this morning, or this afternoon now, I want us to remember Paul's exhortation here in Philippians 4 verse 6.

[4 : 49] And particularly I want us to think about those last three words in verse 6. Known unto God. Known unto God.

And I want us to think about them because they draw our attention to two things. They draw our attention to a painting and to prayer. They draw our attention to a painting and a prayer.

And there are two headings this morning. A painting and a prayer. So first of all, a painting. We'll read our verse again. Verse 6. Be careful for nothing, says Paul.

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Now if you were at the Boer of War Memorial service earlier on, we mentioned there that in order to explain and express the awful tragedies of war, many poems have been written over the years.

And some of them we've become very familiar with, such as Colonel John McRae's poem, In Flanders Fields, where it says, In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses row on row.

[6 : 05] There's also the poem, or Robert Lawrence Binion's poem, where we draw out the ode to remembrance, which is often recited at remembrance services, where it says, They shall grow not old, As we that are left to grow old.

Age shall not weary them, Nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, And in the morning we will remember them. Another famous war poem, which we mentioned in Boer was actually a hymn called Recessional.

And it was composed by a Christian man called Joseph Rudyard Kipling. But what's interesting is that Kipling, he often had this biblical emphasis in all that he wrote.

Because he didn't want people to forget the Lord. He wanted them to acknowledge. He wanted his nation to acknowledge the true source of victory, and the true source of peace in their land.

And in the opening verse of Kipling's hymn, it reads, God of our fathers, known of old, Lord of our far-flung battle line, Beneath whose awful hand we hold, Dominion over palm and pine.

[7 : 15] And then there's this refrain at the end, where it says, Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget. Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.

But you know, what many people don't realize is that Kipling's hymn, it's, and that phrase, Lord God of hosts, it comes from the Bible, it comes from Psalm 46, the psalm we were singing earlier, where it was described there, that our God is the Lord of hosts.

He's the Lord God of hosts. But more than that, the well-known war phrase that you often see on many epitaphs throughout our nation, that war phrase, lest we forget, that comes from Deuteronomy chapter 6, which was this exhortation and encouragement to Moses, or from Moses to the Israelites, where he said to the Israelites on the banks of the River Jordan, he said, take care lest we forget the Lord.

Take care lest we forget the Lord. And that's why Kipling prayed. He prayed, Lord God of hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.

But there was another biblical phrase which Rudyard Kipling pulled from Scripture. And it was from here, in Philippians 4 verse 6, where Paul gives this exhortation and encouragement to the Philippians.

[8 : 49] He says, Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. Known unto God.

But the amazing thing about this phrase, known unto God, it wasn't penned in a poem by Kipling. It was inscribed on unidentified war graves.

It was inscribed on unidentified war graves. You know, towards the end of the First World War, Kipling, he joined what was called the IWGC, the Imperial War Graves Commission.

And one of the roles and responsibilities they had was to provide a headstone for all the unidentified war graves. Because as you know, there were many families of the fallen whose relatives and their remains, they were never recovered or even identified.

In fact, when the funding of the IWGC, when it was discussed in Parliament, Kipling was quick to defend it because he said, our boy was missing at Luz.

[9 : 57] The ground was battered and mined past all hope of any trace of being recovered or recognized. I wish some of the people who are making this trouble in Parliament realized how fortunate they are to have a name on a headstone in a known place.

Of course, Kipling, as a father, his passion and his persuasion of Parliament, it was heavenly influenced by the loss of his only son. He lost his only son, John Kipling.

He had died at the Battle of Luz in France on the Western Front in 1915. And as a grieving father, like many others who loved and lost because of the horrors of war, a headstone was erected for Kipling's son.

And the inscription that was on it was, Known unto God. Known unto God. They didn't know where he was.

They didn't have a body to bury. But he was known unto God. And here, what's fascinating is that in 1992, 77 years after the Battle of Luz, the remains of Kipling's son were found.

[11 : 16] John Kipling was finally found. And of course, his father never lived to bury him. He died in 1939. But today, because of Kipling's biblical influence upon this commission that was given by Parliament, today there are 212,000 graves across the world with headstones on them with the inscription, Known unto God.

God. Known unto God. And you know what's really interesting is that eight of those headstones, eight of those headstones can be found in Sandwich Cemetery in Stornoway.

But those eight in Sandwich, they didn't die on the battlefield. They drowned at the beaks of Holland. And eight of them, it says, Known unto God.

They were so badly injured after being thrown by the waves of a forced gale onto the beaks of Holland that they couldn't be identified. Some cases, after the Orkney disaster, there were bodies who were washed up on the shore weeks later and they couldn't be identified.

And all that could be said of them, of these eight men, was that they were known unto God. They were known unto God. And you know, we said earlier that in order to express and explain the awful tragedies of war, many poems have been written.

[12 : 42] But many pictures have also been painted. And in particular, pictures have been painted in memory of the Oway disaster. Where as you know, over 200 servicemen, they died in the Oway disaster.

They drowned only feet from home. And you know, we often say that a picture speaks a thousand words. And that's certainly the case with many of the Oway paintings.

Although, if you have seen Margaret Ferguson's works, she did a hundred paintings or now a hundred and two paintings or portraits of servicemen who were lost on the Oway.

And those Oway 100, you could say, they speak a hundred thousand words. But you know, as islanders, we're very familiar with what happened on that New Year's Day morning in 1919.

Our island had already experienced a hard war with over 1,000 men dying in the conflict. Per head of population, it's said that the Isle of Lewis had one of the highest number in Britain signing up to join the Great War with 6,200 men.

[13 : 55] This inevitably meant that our island would lose a higher proportion of servicemen than any or many of the other places throughout the British Isles.

And so, to experience such a great loss and then to encounter one of the worst naval disasters in British peacetime history right on our doorstep, it made the Oway disaster probably one of the darkest moments in our island's history.

In fact, it was so painful for those who were alive at the time that it was never the done thing to talk about it. They never spoke about what happened on that New Year's Day because they had such vivid memories of plucking servicemen from the water at Holland or they had the vivid memory of the horse and cart delivering the remains of loved ones throughout the communities of the island.

And one of the most vivid accounts given of the Isle Air disaster was actually by the man I'm named after, Murdo MacFarlane, the Melbost Bard.

I don't have his gift. But he described on that the New Year's Day morning, he described with men scattered along the beaches amongst the discarded overcoats, he said there was children's toys and gifts that they were bringing home to their families.

[15 : 19] And there was even one man with an engagement ring in his pocket. He was there amongst the wreckage of the Iolea. But you know, this scene of devastation and death, it was portrayed in a painting.

A painting by a man called William Wallace. Now, it wasn't the 13th century Scottish knight, but the 21st century artist, a man from Stornoway, William Wallace.

And he painted this fascinating picture that depicts and describes the Iolea disaster. And I don't know if you've seen this painting. It was named after Kipling's biblical phrase, known unto God.

That's what the picture is called. It's called known unto God. And it was inspired by those eight unidentified service men and their graves found in Sandwick Cemetery.

They lost their lives in the Iolea and they were only known unto God. And I'd encourage you to look at William Wallace's painting. If I had a large screen in front of you this morning, I'd show it to you and point out different things in it.

[16 : 26] But instead, I put it on this week's notices. So you have to go and look for it yourself. Because it's this eight foot, it's eight foot tall by four foot wide, and it's a symbolic painting.

It's a symbolic painting called known unto God. And when you look at it, you'll see that it is one of these unidentified service men. It wasn't a portrait of anyone. It was an unidentified service man standing with an angel behind him.

But he's also got a rope, you'll notice, a rope wrapped around his leg. But as the rope goes up his leg, it turns into a serpent. Which, of course, depicts Satan and the serpent from the Garden of Eden and the fall of mankind and the reminder that the wages of sin is death.

Also around this service man, right in front of him, when you see the picture, there are many artifacts of debris. The debris that Murtagh MacFarlane described, where there's plates and cups and toys and pictures.

But also in this painting, there are three birds. Three birds in the painting. There's the crow. The crow is there because, as you know, a group of crows is referred to as a murder of crows.

[17 : 43] So there's a crow there. There's also a dove. The dove is right in the center of the painting. And it's right in the center in order to remind us that the dove is a symbol of hope and peace in the midst of sorrow.

But also just beside the service man who was only known unto God was a dead eagle. dead eagle is lying there on the ground which was symbolic of the Iolea because, as you know, the name Iolea or Eulera is the Gaelic for eagle.

In fact, in relation to the eagle, and this is where it's so fascinating, in relation to this dead eagle, at the bottom of this eight-foot painting is an open Bible.

And on the open Bible is a magnifying glass. And the magnifying glass is magnifying one verse in Scripture. And the verse of Scripture that it's magnifying is Isaiah 40, the very last verse, where it says that they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. I know, it's a fascinating painting that easily speaks a thousand words.

[19 : 08] And I'd encourage you to look at it and look into why William Wallace painted this painting. But, you know, it's also a stark and solemn reminder to us that there were so many, so many throughout history who were loved and lost in the horrors of war.

and they were only known unto God. They were known unto God. And so we see that Paul's exhortation and encouragement to the Philippians, it draws our attention to a painting.

The painting known unto God. But of course, Paul here, he's drawing our attention to prayer in verse 6, which is what we see secondly. A prayer.

So a painting and a prayer. A prayer. Look at verse 6 again. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Now when Rudyard Kipling instituted and insisted that all these war graves adopt the biblical phrase from verse 6 here, known unto God, Kipling did so with acute awareness that there were many service men who had died and their bodies were so badly disfigured that they couldn't be identified by their families.

[20 : 29] Or similar to his own experience, there were family members who left home and they went to war and they never returned. Their bodies never came back. And it seems that Kipling used Paul's words in Philippians in order to comfort and bring consolation to many of these grieved family and friends.

He wanted to remind them that we may not know who they were or what they went through or how they suffered but God knows they were known unto God.

God knows who they were. They were known unto God and they were known unto God and this is what I love. They were known unto God because the God of heaven, the creator and sustainer of this world, He is omniscient.

omniscient. He is all-knowing. He knows what all our service men and women went through in all the wars of the past and the present.

He knows what the prisoner of war camps were like. He knows the reality of war. He knows who they were. He knows what happened to them. He even knows where they died and where they are buried.

[21 : 46] He knows everything about them because they are known unto God. But my friend, our God not only knows everything about them, He knows everything about us because we are known unto God.

And this is the wonder of who our God is and this is something we might often forget. We are known unto God. Our God knows who we really are and He knows absolutely everything there is to know about us.

Well, you know, let's make this more personal to you this morning. Your God knows everything about you.

He knows everything about you. You are known unto God. You are known unto God because your Bible tells you and teaches you that He knew you before the foundation of this world.

He knows when you were born. He knows where you were born because He saw you when you were being fearfully and wonderfully made in your mother's womb.

[22 : 54] He knows your name because He knows all about your life. He knows the number of hairs upon your head. He knows where you live. He knows your family. He knows where you work.

He knows where you have worked in the past. He knows your wants. He knows your ways. He knows your words. He knows your weaknesses. He knows your sin. He knows your sicknesses.

He knows your suffering. He knows your sorrow. He knows your history. But He also knows your present and He knows your future. He knows your life. He knows your length of days.

He knows your appointed time to die. He knows what's in your head this morning or this afternoon. And He knows what's in your heart. Oh, He knows what's in your heart.

My friend, you are known unto God. You are known unto God. Because you are omniscient God. He knows you better than you know yourself.

[23 : 52] This is the amazing thing about Him. He knows you better than you know yourself. And the wonder of wonders is He knows you and He cares for you and He loves you.

He loves you more than words can explain or express. This is the wonder of wonders of who He is. Our God, your God knows who you are.

He knows He loves you so much and He cares for you much more than words can explain or express. And you know, that's why He actually demonstrated His love and declared His love towards you in the death of His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend, you are known. You are known unto God. You know, that's why Paul exhorted and encouraged the church in Philippi. This young church, this struggling church, he encouraged them, he said to them, be careful for nothing.

Be careful for nothing. I love the way the authorized version puts it. Be careful for nothing. In other words, don't be so full of care that it paralyzes you.

[25 : 02] Don't be overwhelmed and overcome by your cares and all your concerns. Why? Because you have a heavenly Father who knows you and cares for you and loves you.

Therefore, says Paul in verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always. You're to be the most, you're to be the happiest people in the world. Your heavenly Father knows you and loves you and cares for you.

So rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I'll say it, says Paul, again, rejoice because you have access to the throne of grace. You have access to heaven itself.

You have access to our great and gracious God where he can deal with every care and every concern that you bring to him. That's why Paul says, in everything, in everything, whether small or great, whether significant or insignificant, whether trivial, you might think it's trivial, or even important, in everything, in every prayer, in every plea, in every petition, in everything, says Paul, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

You know, my friend, your Bible teaches and tells you. It reminds you and reassures you. It encourages you and exhorts you to come. To come. To come and just cast all your cares upon the Lord.

[26 : 36] Why? Because he cares for you. You might not believe that, but Scripture states it. Scripture affirms it.

He cares for you. He cares for you. In fact, you know, that's why Jesus says to us in the Gospel, Come, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

You know, even that's why the hymn writer, he could say, well, what a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. And the hymn writer, he asks, he asks you, have we trials and temptations?

[27 : 45] Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. No, take it. to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful? No. Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness. Oh, my friend, take it to the Lord in prayer. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

My friend, the wonder of wonders is that you're omniscient God. He knows you. He loves you. He cares for you more than words can express or explain.

But he has demonstrated his love for you. He has declared his love for you in the death of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the gospel calls you to just come to him. Come to him. Come and confess him. Come and know him. Come and love him.

[28 : 47] Come to him in prayer. Because what a friend we have in Jesus. My friend, your life is known. It is known unto God.

Everything in your life is known unto God. You know, I just want to say in conclusion that those eight headstones in Sandwick Cemetery with Kipling's biblical inscription on them.

The inscription. I'd encourage you to go and see it. It just says known, well, it says that they died on the Isle Air, but they were known unto God. And they were not only those who couldn't be identified.

They were those who died and were lost. They were those who died and were lost. Along with all the others on board the Isle Air, these men, they had served both king and country.

They had survived the great war. They were on their way home. But they died. They were drowned only meters from the shore. The Isle Air disaster, as you know, it was an awful tragedy because those who died were lost.

[29 : 57] And what could be said about them is that they were so near and yet so far. They died and were lost. They were so near and yet so far.

And you know, my unconverted friend, how I love you. My unconverted friend, here or at home this morning, I just want to lovingly apply this to you because, you know, if you die in your spiritual condition that you're in today, if you die in that condition, it will be said of you like it could be said of those on the aisle there.

You were lost. You were so near and yet so far. You were so near and yet so far.

You were so near because you were in church often or online often. You were so near because you heard the call of the gospel and the call to come to Christ.

You were so near because you were brought up in a Christian home and you were surrounded by Christian neighbors and Christian friends. You were so near because you had the influence and input from Christians around you in your congregation and in your community.

[31 : 19] You were so near because you had all the privileges that could possibly be given to you to ensure that you would seek the Lord with all your heart.

and yet my unconverted friend and I say this to you lovingly. If you make shipwreck of your soul you only have yourself to blame.

If you make shipwreck of your soul on the rocks of death you only have yourself to blame. And it will be said of you and I don't want it said of you.

I really don't want it said of you. It will be said of you that you are lost. You are so near and yet so far.

My friend you are known unto God. You are known by Him. He loves you. He cares for you. You are known unto God but you have a responsibility this morning or this afternoon to make yourself known to Him.

[32 : 29] He knows you but you make yourself known to Him. You come to Him. You confess your sin. You commit your life.

You call upon Him. But one thing my friend do not make shipwreck of your soul. You come to this God because there is a prayer here where Paul says be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

You make yourself known to God this morning because He longs to hear from you. He longs to hear from you.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. our heavenly Father we give thanks to Thee for the wonder of prayer that we're able to come before the God of heaven and that we feel that we don't have the right words or even the right things to say but we give thanks that Thou art the God who knows our heart who knows even our mind and who understands what we are going through.

and Lord help us we pray to come and to keep coming to keep coming and to keep casting all our cares upon Thee being assured that Thou art the God who does care for us a God who loves us with an everlasting love a God who has demonstrated and declared His love for us in and through His Son and Lord we do pray oh we pray for our unconverted friends that none of them would be lost having been so near oh Lord we pray that they would come to Christ that they would seek Him while He's to be found that they would call upon Him while He is near today Lord hear us we ask not because we deserve anything from Thee but solely because Thou art a God who is gracious a God who is able to save to the uttermost who is able to pluck us as brands from the burning oh Lord do us good then we pray bless this day to us the Lord's day help us not only to remember the fallen but to remember that we worship a living Saviour one who has defeated death conquered the grave and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel keep us then we pray go before us take away our iniquities receive us graciously for Jesus' sake

[35 : 11] Amen Well we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 139 Psalm 139 it's in the Scottish Psalter it's on page 432 Psalm 139 we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 6 Psalm 139 Psalm 139 it's a psalm that reminds us that our God is omniscient He is all knowing He knows everything about us and that's not something to make us afraid that should be the greatest comfort that our God knows everything about us and that He wants us to speak to Him O Lord thou hast me searched and known thou knowest my sitting down and rising up yea all my thoughts afar to thee are known my footsteps and my lying down thou compasses always thou also most entirely art acquainted with all my ways for in my tongue before I speak not any word can be but altogether lo Lord it is well known to thee behind before thou hast beset and laid on me thine hand such knowledge is too strange for me too high to understand these verses of Psalm 139 to God's praise

O Lord thou hast me searched and known and rose my sitting down and rising up yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known my footsteps and my lying down the compasses always the most most and tired the arm and

I wait with all my ways for if I come before I speak me not any word can be but all together lo O Lord it is well all to thee be behind me for me the last be said and and laid all behind such knowledge and to to stay for me do

I to understand understand the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen