

John 10:11-18 ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

"Knowing Jesus"

I get a lot of spam and unfortunately I have to check my spam folder. Sometimes Yahoo! dumps real e-mail into the spam folder and worse, spammers are often clever enough to get a subject line through that looks like real e-mail. So, I have to open it and it's some foreign woman wanting to get to know me and not only me, revrbenson, but also all the other revrb...s at yahoo. Apparently, someone hacked into Yahoo!'s grand list of addresses. "I want to get to know you" she says but we all know she is a he. But, why would he think that anyone would respond to spam from someone who's obviously hacked a database. I guess there are some really lonely men who will respond believing this woman to be his soul mate. A few e-mail exchanges and then a few pictures and then he's sending her money to help out her mother or to get her out of her country into his. Several thousand dollars later, he realizes he's been scammed by someone he thought he knew quite well, yet never actually met.

What is it to know another person? Just because someone feels that someone else is their soul mate doesn't mean they know that person at all. We can't even know ourselves all that well. How many times in our lives do we surprise ourselves by doing or saying things we never thought we would do. Like, when I was a child I always thought of myself as not the bullying type. But then one day I found myself with one of my best friends chasing another one of my best friends with sticks with the intention of beating him because we thought it would be fun. I never thought I was the type to do that but apparently I have it in me. How many times throughout our lives have we done things we felt ethically questionable just to position ourselves better at work or to better our own financial situations. Really, truly, we are not who we think ourselves to be. I thank God that the Holy Spirit is at work in me to make me who the Father wants me to be in spite of me, that the real me is now hidden with Christ in God and he is slowly revealing me to me. If it were up to me to make me who I am, all I can say is that without Christ a lot of people would get hurt.

So, if we cannot really know ourselves then how can we think we can ever really know another person? This is why relationships involve trust or rather faith. Our knowledge of others builds through a give and take relationship with them. To get to know another about all we can do is learn their patterns so that we can somewhat predict their actions and feelings. Moreover, knowing other

involves learning their personal boundaries; what we can and cannot do around them. Furthermore, knowing another involves communication; listening as they tell us what is going on inside of them and even then all we can do is imagine what it must be like to be them. You see, we can never ever know what is really going on inside another person; what it's like to be them.

Martin Buber, a much respected Jewish Bible scholar and philosopher sums it up very well. He says we know only the change that another person has brought about in us. I agree. Sadly, I know nothing of the inner workings even of my own wife. All I know is the impact her inner workings have on me. To tell another person “I love you” will never be anything more than infatuation, which is being in love with your own imaginations of love, unless it is to say, “I am laying myself aside for you and therefore, I will enjoy, tolerate, and suffer the impact you have on me and the changes you bring about in me.” We can only know/feel what's going on in ourselves; never what's up in another.

Now having said all that, what does Jesus mean when he says “I know my own and my own know me just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Indeed, I lay aside my life for the sheep.”? First off, the Bible says the Trinity knows us better than we know ourselves. That's a given since God is supposed to know everything and that should be comforting. The Trinity knows us better than we know ourselves and lays himself aside to make us fully to be who he created us to be. That's totally reassuring. That aside, what is it then to know Jesus?

Well, there are two words in Greek for knowing. The first is *oida* and it is the word that is typically used when speaking of knowing another person. It means you have observed who they are and have learned a bit of what they are about in life and therefore you go along with them. Therefore, to know Jesus, to *oida* Jesus is to have knowledge of his kingdom mission and it further means we subject ourselves to him and serve that mission. When Peter denied knowing Jesus (Lk 22), he was saying “I am not part of what he is up to; therefore, I do not know him.” *Oida* acknowledges that we cannot know the inner workings of another person, only their externals, only what they choose to reveal.

The second word is *gynosko* and it is the Apostle John's favourite term for describing our relationship to Jesus. It suggests having a personal fellowship with him that is more than externals. It is to have union with Jesus in the Holy Spirit so that we know him from the inside out rather than from the outside in. It is to know him in such a deep, inwardly way that we share in Jesus the Son's relationship with God the Father. He knows the Father as the steadfastly loving and faithful one whom he adores and obeys. Therefore, that is all we know of the Father and how we also respond to him. Jesus shows us that the proper response to the Father's love is to lay aside ourselves for others. Furthermore the Jesus we know is the Jesus who lays aside his entire person for us so that we know him as the one who lays himself aside for us that we might have life. If we tie this back in to what Martin Buber had to say, the change that Jesus brings about in us, what we know of God, is brought about by encountering his very self rather than our imaginations of what God ought to be. Therefore, we know God as the one who loves us, who lays aside himself for us and who enjoys, tolerates, or suffers the impact we have on him and we do bring about changes in the

Trinity. Indeed, God knows death because of us. To say this another way, the only soul mate we will ever know is God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can only know people by their externals, but what the Trinity reveals to us of himself is his internals, his very, very self.

Our knowing of Jesus becomes complete in faithfulness and obedience; when we become those who love others. To know someone is to do what they do. Back to Peter’s denial – fear overcame him and lead him to deny knowing Jesus. Yet, in the end, Peter died by being crucified upside down because he said he was not worthy to die in the same way his Lord had died. How did this change from denying to knowing happen? Peter went from simply knowing the externals of Jesus to being brought into knowing the internals of God the Hly Trinity through union with Jesus in the Holy Spirit and therein sharing Jesus’ relationship with the Father. That change in the way of knowing Jesus led to Peter’s serving Jesus even unto an excruciating death. He could no longer deny the one whom he knew and knew him so deeply. 1 John 3:16 reads, “We know love by this that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” The more we know of his love, of him, the more we change and do as he did.

I don’t know about you folks but pondering this passage of Scripture makes me hungry. It is a rare person who does not hunger for this sort of knowing another and being known by another. Intimacy is the word for it. We want to be known from the inside out. We want another to share in who we ourselves are, to share our burdens and our joys. In Jesus is the only relationship in which this can happen. So, opening up devotional time in our lives for prayer, Bible reading and study, and Christian fellowship is truly like relational partners setting aside time during the day to talk to each other. It’s like married people having a date night every week. The only difference is that in devotional time with the Trinity we truly are with our soul mate. Moreover, that time we spend with the Trinity equips us to lay aside ourselves so that we can lay aside ourselves and truly love our spouses, families, and friends. Amen.