

### Seek and Know

*God’s Truth is revealed to those who truly seek it.*

.....**Isaiah 55: 1 – 13 (selected verses)**.....

***“Come, all who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup>Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. <sup>3</sup>Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David... <sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.’ <sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. <sup>8</sup>‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways’, declares the LORD.”***.....

.....**Luke 11:9-10**.....

***“So I say to you: ‘Ask, and it will be given to you; Seek, and you will find; Knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks, receives; he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”***.....

This past weekend, Scott and I traveled to another world. When we stepped into the cab outside LaGuardia Airport, it was obvious that we weren’t in Pittsburgh anymore. Our taxi driver wore a turban and had an intriguing religious symbol hanging from his rear-view mirror, along with a pink lotus flower. The entire drive to our hotel, he was talking with someone on the phone in a language we didn’t know.

The diversity of people is one of the things my son and his wife love about New York City. It was fascinating to guess what languages the people passing on the streets were speaking, and to see the myriad of lifestyles in the neighborhood where they live.

They live on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor of an apartment building overlooking the East River. The view from their living room is breath-taking. Their wall-to-wall window looks directly into mid-town Manhattan. The sun setting every night behind the city was absolutely spectacular. It was so gorgeous that it felt kind of surreal.

On Saturday night we were looking out the window at the lights, and we noticed little orange globes, floating one by one, up into the dark sky. They sailed from our side of the river, across the water and up, up, up, over the tall buildings in Manhattan. It took us a while to figure out what they were.

We realized that they were ‘*candle lanterns*’, lit in celebration of the religious festival of *Diwali*. It really was very beautiful. I could imagine how fun it would be for neighbors to celebrate together. I also realized how easy it is to merge faith traditions together, without realizing what each stood for at its core.

While it *is* right to respect other religions, it *is* crucial to know what God's truth is and what it isn't. In fact, it is imperative to make sure that your soul is anchored to the One true eternal foundation, and to never wander from it.

Of course, I looked up the meaning of the lights of *Diwali*. During Diwali, lamps are lit to '*symbolize spiritual victory of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance*'.<sup>1</sup> It sounds like something Christians would also celebrate, until you realize that *Dwali* celebrations honor the Hindu goddess Lakshmi (*Lock-shmee*), who is the wife and '*divine energy*' of their Supreme god, Vishnu. She and Vishnu are thought to '*create, protect and transform the universe*' together.

We know from our Bible that there is only One True God who created the world, sustains the world, and is the only true source of divine energy. Sometimes it's hard to spot counterfeit claims. There is a very good reason God has given us the commandments, '***Have no other gods before me,***' and, '***You shall not bow down or worship any other idol.***' (Exodus 20: 3 – 5)

As we walked around the neighborhood, I realized that there were so many storefronts that advertised a variety of spiritual practices; but I saw none celebrating Jesus. We did pass one beautiful old church building, but sadly, it had been turned into an apartment building.

I was overwhelmed by how easy it is for people to be led away from worshiping the true God. There and also right here, and especially on the internet, we are constantly enticed by offers of '*spiritual healing*' that is not from God. One very popular practice is cleansing of the body's 'Chakras' and using '*healing stones*'. It has become very '*mainstream.*' It is also very possible your doctor might even recommend them to you as a form of calming meditation.

Please recognize what these practices really are! Disguised as helpful ways to clear the '*negative energy*' in your body and soul, they instead lead you into a whole realm of spiritual deception. I feel that the 6<sup>th</sup> Chakra, which sits between your eyes, is especially dangerous, because it promises '*extrasensory perception, intuition, and psychic abilities.*'<sup>2</sup> Friends, please, stay away! In my opinion, these things should be marked with a big red caution sign: DANGER! Dabbling in these meditations opens your mind, heart, body and soul to spirits that are *not* from God.

Coming face-to-face with all of this made me wonder. Would I be a Christian if I had not been born into a Christian home? Could I be celebrating Vishnu and Lakshmi? Who would I think God was? Would I have hope after this life? It unsettles me, to the depths of my heart, to think of all the people who are naively on the path that leads to spiritual ruin.

I also want you to live your life with your eyes wide open. I want you to measure everything against the Word of God. I want to warn you not to open any '*doors*' to invite other '*gods*' to influence your heart and mind and put your soul in jeopardy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diwali>

<sup>2</sup> <https://blog.mindvalley.com/7-chakras/>

Where then, do we turn when our soul is needy? When we are discouraged, confused, misunderstood, frightened, angry, hurt, in pain and suffering; where then do we go? Well-meaning friends may say, *'try this,'* but God says, ***'Come to me.'*** In Jeremiah, God promised, ***'Call to me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.'*** (Jeremiah 33:3)

Before God called Abraham to begin the nation of Israel, there were *many* other religions. Abraham himself was raised in Ur of the Chaldees. At that time, the famous Ziggurat built to Nanna the Moon god was the center of life in the city of Ur. It's likely that Abraham and his parents at one time practiced that worship too.<sup>3</sup> But God, the true source of life, called Abraham to leave that prosperous culture and follow Him into the unknown to form a people who would worship Him and bring blessing to the entire world. (Genesis 12)

Jesus says, ***'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, ... Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'*** (Matthew 11: 28 – 29)

Jesus promises in our verse from Luke this morning that if we **ASK** God for help, he will give it. He promises if we **SEEK** to know God's Truth, we will find it. Jesus promises that we just need to **KNOCK** on God's door, and He will share His life with us.

At every turn in our lives, Jesus is there, waiting to be invited in, to lift us up, to heal, to comfort, and to show the *only* WAY to live in the presence of the Only True God. It's up to us to ASK, SEEK and KNOCK.

When Israel was really down and out, God gave the prophet Isaiah the words of hope that we read earlier. God asked Isaiah to share His promise with His people. God said, ***'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters.'***

Whom does God invite? The thirsty. Have you ever been so thirsty and your throat so dry that your tongue didn't work right? I have. My mouth was so dry I couldn't even swallow a cracker!

The *'water'* God gives is the spiritual *'water'* that a parched soul longs for. All who *'drink'* from God's well receive God's abundant life. In the Old Testament, Ezekiel had a vision of what God's life-giving Spirit can do. He saw God renewing the *'dry bones'* of Israel, bringing new life to dead hopes. (Ezekiel 37) Ezekiel saw water flowing from under the throne of God and restoring life to the parched land. Everywhere the water touched was transformed from brown and dry to green and lush. (Ezekiel 47:1 – 12) God promises to do the same for you and me. We just need to be sure to *'drink'* the *'right'* kind of spiritual water that brings true life.

The Jewish people had a sacred water ritual during the Feast of Sukkot (*Sue-COAT*) in Jesus' time. To them, it was symbolic of God fulfilling His promise to one day ***'pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.'*** (Isaiah 44:3)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Abraham-religion.html>  
Burgettstown Presbyterian Church

In John's gospel we learn that when Jesus attended this Water Libation Ceremony in the Temple, Jesus actually stood up and interrupted the sacred words of the service. Jesus in a **'loud voice'**, told the crowd **'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. For whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'** (John 7: 37-39)

What are you **'thirsty'** for today? God offers to quench your thirst for free. Isaiah tells us in our Old Testament reading today: **'Come, all who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost'**. What is it you are **'thirsting'** for? **'Water'** to revive your soul? Do you long to nourish your soul with **'milk'**? Or are you yearning for the **'joy'** symbolized here by **'wine'**?

In the next verse, God asks, **'Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?'** Some things do seem to satisfy us for a while, don't they? But everything that is not part of God's will, does, sooner or later, turn sour. We know that our bodies can't run for long on **'junk food'**, so why do we settle for spiritual **'food'** that ruins our relationship with God? God pleads with His beloved people, **'Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare'**.

When we turn to God, He promises to put all the **'spiritual energy'** we need to navigate life right into our hearts, minds, body and soul through the power of His Holy Spirit living in us.

Not only will He keep us close in this life, but also in the life to come. God promises to make an **'everlasting covenant'** of **'faithful love'** with each of us. Friends, it doesn't get any better than that! All the fame and pleasures of this world pale in comparison to spending forever in the glorious presence of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We must not give in to what the **'god of this present age'** tries to entice us with. (2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Peter 5:8) A little pleasure deferred now will yield an eternity of blessing.

The remaining verses from Isaiah contain a **'to do'** list if you truly want to know the **'thoughts'** and **'ways'** of God. First, **'Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.'** The Bible tells us that there will be a time when the door to the LORD's house will be locked forever, and no amount of loud knocking will open it. (Matthew 25: 1 – 8) We are living in an era of grace when the LORD still **'may be found.'** Isaiah and Jesus urgently warn us: **'Seek'** God now. **'Call'** on Him now, because He won't be **'near'** forever.

The next step is to **'Forsake'** evil thoughts and ways. Flee from them and turn to the LORD. Do not be afraid of God, because He will **'have mercy'** on you, and will **'freely pardon'** you.

We all try to figure God out, but it is just not humanly possible. **'God's thoughts are not like ours'** and His ways are not something we can comprehend. For these reasons, we thank God for His Word to us in Scripture and through His Son. God sent Jesus to live among us, to bring **'light'** into our **'darkness'**, to protect us from the Evil One, and to give us true knowledge of our God who loves us more than we can begin to imagine. By the incredible wideness of God's love for us, we have everything we will ever need. Amen.