



JUNE 9, 2008

Gentle Reader,

In your hands is the first issue of a special new *Listening* series, entitled *Knowing Him*. In this series we will be considering, in an intimate, introspective way, the truth of what our Lord Jesus is to be to us today—right here and now.

The old hymn by C. Austin Miles says it best:

*He speaks, and the sound of His voice  
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,  
And the melody that He gave to me,  
Within my heart is ringing.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,  
And He tells me I am His own;  
And the joy we share as we tarry there  
None other has ever known.*

As much as we may know the historical Christ, many of us have lost touch with His presence in the here and now. If this is true in your life, I invite you to join me in rediscovering the *personal* Jesus—the Jesus who walks with us, and talks with us, and shares with us our everyday sorrows and joys.

Your brother in Christ,

Dave

PS: If you find these issues of value in your walk with Christ, I encourage you to share them with family and friends—or consider inviting them to subscribe to *Listening*, and receive it each week for themselves.

david s. lampel  
winterset, iowa  
50273-8172  
USA

515-462-1971

<http://dlampel.com>



*When my daily deeds  
ordinarily lose life and song,  
my heart begins to bleed,  
sensitivity to Him is gone.  
I've run the race but set my own pace  
and face a shattered soul,  
Now the Gentle Arms of Jesus  
warm my hunger to be whole.*

*Oh, I want to know You more!  
Deep within my soul I want to know You,  
Oh, I want to know You.  
To feel Your Heart and know Your Mind,  
looking in Your eyes stirs up within me,  
cries that says I want to know You  
Oh, I want to know You more.  
Oh, I want to know You more.*

Steve Green

# Knowing Him

## The Attendant

THE ROOM IS BEREFT OF COMFORT. Not quite sterile, but devoid of tactile humanity. The nurses and doctors try to be compassionate, but their consolation is mechanical, generic.

It is not their fault.

They do not yet know her.

She is old. Very old. There is no part of her frail body that is not

riddled with pain. Her mind is clouded by narcotics, easily confused. But she is not senile. She does not have Alzheimer's. She is not "past it." She is just old. Very old.

The nurses and aides call her "sweetheart" and "honey," but the casual familiarity sounds condescending. They don't really mean it. They can't.

They don't know her.

Try as they might to be friendly and caring, it is still mechanical. They are coolly professional. They go about their duties with smooth, laudable efficiency. They ask questions, but don't always listen to the answers. They smile, and nod their heads, but hear only the words they think they hear.

It is not their fault.

She is still a stranger to them.

But there is someone in the room to whom she is not a stranger, someone who hears everything. He listens. Truly listens. He understands. He hears the sound of her jumbled thoughts and His heart breaks.

For the old woman is His child.

He knows her. Completely. Intimately.



The occasional passerby glances at her through the window into the room, sees the tired old woman lying curled up on a gurney. In the cold, impersonal room she lies alone. Isolated.

But the old woman is *not* alone. The passing stranger does not see. There is a person in the room he cannot see. He cannot see that the person's warm, tender presence has enveloped the old woman, the entire room.

She is not alone.

She is with Jesus.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

John 10:14-15



I do not see Him either, but I know the old woman well enough to know He is there. I know that she began loving Jesus decades earlier—a lifetime, really—when she was just a girl. The living Christ came in to live with her. She understood and responded to the Spirit's call. At that, the eternal Son became hers, and she became His.

Over the many years, He did not always remove her pain, her trials, her suffering. For His wisdom surpassed hers, and His reasons were higher than hers. But whatever trials she walked through, she walked through them with Him.

Her Lord.

He was always near. She listened to His comforting voice, held his reassuring hand. To her Jesus was not just a name, not just a lyric in a familiar hymn, or a flannel graph figure in a Sunday School lesson. He was as real, as substantial to her as her own brothers, her own husband.

He was personal.

When Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

John 11:32-36



The doctors and nurses don't know it, but He is in charge. They don't see Him. They don't feel His presence. But He is the one

moving them about (no one messes with His child without His knowing it). Nothing occurring in the room surprises Him. He is not a spectator. He is an *attendant*. He is the old woman's advocate. Her friend. Her husband. Her brother.

More than these, He is *with* her.

He is *part* of her.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Galatians 2:20

## Knowing

I look at her and wonder if the Lord Jesus is as much to me. Is He always in attendance in my life? Surely He is, but do I know it? Do I feel Him when He is near? When I am so old that my conscious brain has forgotten Jesus, will the rest of me be so infused with His life that I will still *feel* His presence—even if I lack the mental acuity to *identify* that presence? Looking at the old woman I wonder—do I really know Jesus at all? Is He so real to me? I sense that she has *forgotten* more about Jesus than I may ever know.

Perhaps it is time for me to reacquaint myself with my "personal Savior"—this one I have called "Lord" for so many decades.

## The Bible Tells Me So

It goes all the way back to the earliest days of Sunday School. It may have been the first time the essential truth was stated so clearly and simply to me. Tucked back in the "Childhood" section of the old *Worship and Service Hymnal*, the words are, sadly, forgotten, or dismissed by adults as being too childish. But the words penned by Anna B. Warner are addressed no less to the senior citizen than the preschooler.

*Jesus loves me! this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to Him belong;  
They are weak, but He is strong.*

Following the instruction of Jesus Himself, I have always addressed my prayers to my heavenly Father.

"Pray then, in this way:  
Our Father who art in heaven..."

But the martyr Stephen, in the death throes of his stoning, prayed directly to Jesus.

When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7:58-60

Have I, over the years, forgotten that God the Son loves me, because I invariably speak and listen to only God the Father? Have I gone without the companionship of the Son, because I have been overwhelmed by the majesty of the Father?

...the Bible tells me so...

and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—

Revelation 1:5

## Forgetting

I fear that my relationship with Jesus—that sweet and mysterious communion of creation with Creator—has become dry and brittle, as little-used and dusty as the New Testament in the home of a Jew. I fear that in my life the too-familiar vernacular—Savior, Lord, Redeemer—has fallen into benumbed disrepair.

Even as I serve Him, I have forgotten *Him*. Even as I remember His sacrifice, I have forgotten *Him*. I have forgotten what He is to be in my life—not two thousand years ago, but now. Today.

Real life, not just history.

Just who *is* Jesus, right now, today?

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