



When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. It was I who taught them to walk. I took them up in my arms. But they did not know that it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness. With bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows his sheep, and his sheep know him.

One of my earliest childhood memories is of my father holding me, deeply into his neck, letting me rest there. Making me safe, warm, and loved.

This is how Jesus holds us. The one who knows the Father, knows us. And knowing Jesus, we know the Father. In Jesus, we know the love of God our Father.

God's love for us is deep and personal. When we pray, 'Our Father,' we are praying, to a person. A person, who happens to be God.

Our prayer arises naturally, spontaneously, out of our relationship with our Father in heaven, through Jesus Christ, God with us. In whom we can know God, as we are known by God.

This knowing is not generic, but specific. We know God, and we are known by God, individually. We are, all of us, individuals. Known, and loved, by our Father in heaven. Truly, madly, deeply.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;
The psalmist prays,
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

We are, each one of us, known and loved by God in this way. Unconditionally. Wonderfully. Mysteriously.

For the One of whom the psalmist speaks is nearer to us than our very breath. Knows us better than we know ourselves. Is revealed in Jesus Christ as love. Pure love.

Known like this, knowing ourselves, loved like this, we do not need the things of this world to make us feel safe, or secure. We no longer cling to money, or power, or self, or status, to live by. We live by, the love of God. And by the love of God

alone. Trusting in God to provide us with all that we need to live our life to him in this world.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows his own. And His own know him. And they follow him in a life laid down, for the worship and service of God alone. For a life set free from the love of money, or power, or pleasure, or status. For a mind set on the things, not of this world, but of heaven. Not on human things, but divine things.

Our minds set, on eternal life. Where neither moth destroys, and where thieves no longer break in and steal. Where there is no more death. Where suffering and crying and pain are no more. For the first things, the things of this world, have passed away. And God makes all things new.

Of our relationship with God the Apostle says:

‘I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.’

I conclude this morning with the Westminster catechism:

‘For what is the chief end of man?’

‘But to know God, and to enjoy him forever.’

The Lord be with you.