

We overhear people claiming to know things in our lessons today.  
I know, we know, we have this knowledge.

Now, we are, allegedly, a learned church, a church with knowledge.  
Or we used to be.

The Church of England gave the world Oxford and Cambridge and produced generations of clergy learned in Biblical languages, in theology, and adept at preaching.

It was said in scholarly circles: *Anglicanus clericus stupor mundi* (an **English** clergyman, one of the **wonders of the world**)

I am not sure that our clergy are as knowledgeable as they once were,  
but there are all kinds of knowledgeable people in this church.

We have professors of politics, history, English literature,  
mathematics, sociology, genetics, and physics.

We have people who've passed exams to be licensed contractors, who know much about  
technology, and who know the ins and outs of a human body.

And we have graduates of the school of life,

One or two schooled in the streets,

a few people with masters degrees from the well-known school of Hard Knocks.

So we know a lot, don't we? We have some knowledge.

And a little knowledge, many have said, is a dangerous thing.

An expert in one field can be a dangerous fool in another.

The claim to knowledge has led to many a blunder and sometimes to pain and even destruction.

Knowing is just not enough.

I do not call you to ignorance; that is surely worse.

But knowledge needs something to guide it.

We think that the little church in Corinth was a place of composed of a least two ranks of people,  
and some of them thought they were better than the others.

More knowledgeable and richer, too.

They were probably the ones who wrote Paul the letters he answered in the book of the Bible we  
call Corinthians.

They seems to have said in their letter that they **knew** that idols weren't real.

That Zeus and Poseidon and Hera and Demeter weren't real,

so animals sacrificed to them and then roasted to perfection could be eaten,

at fancy parties with their rich pagan friends.

Other people may not known that that;

those poorer, less knowledgeable people,

they seem to have written, **but we know**.

The poor, less knowledgeable people shouldn't be scandalized by our eating idol meat, should  
they?

Paul was not so quick to agree to this superior knowledge.

He suggested it might need to be guided by a stronger, stranger force, that of love.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Or as it is sometimes asked of a couple prone to argue:

Would you rather be right or would you rather be married?

You cannot be both.

We don't really know what we most need to know until we have received a gift of love, that orders our knowledge, that we might live with others.

Paul speaks of some manifesting a lack of "necessary knowledge," when they make claims to knowledge.

The "necessary knowledge" comes from loving God and being known by God.

Then the rest of our knowledge is worth having and available to be used in holy ways when the love of God and neighbor has shaped us most fundamentally.

Let's leave the little church in Corinth, Greece and jet across the eastern Mediterranean to Galilee and find a seat in the synagogue in the dusty town of Capernaum.

Among the synagogue attendees, the only one in the synagogue who *knew* who Jesus was, definitively, was the demon.

I **know** who you are, the Holy One of God!

The words Mark used to describe everyone else's cognitive processes were more less specific.

They didn't know, but they "were astounded" by Jesus

and then they "were all amazed" by Jesus

and then they said things like "What is this?" as they saw Jesus heal.

And they spread his fame by their testimony of amazement.

So the one who knew exactly who Jesus was, was the one who wanted to get away from him and who wished he wasn't there.

And the others, who were amazed and astounded but didn't really understand, were the ones to revel in him.

So, there is a deadly understanding possible in the Christian life.

I know the Chalcedonian definition of the person of Christ, one person in two natures, fully God and fully human, united and distinct.

I know the doctrine of the Trinity, with its persons who are on God, united in substance and bonds of love.

I can rattle off good chunks of the catechism and even some verses of Scripture.

And many know more than me.

But love, as Paul showed the Corinthians, and wonder, as we glean from this Gospel story, are gifts that make whatever Christians know really live.

A knowledgeable Christian, in love with God and neighbor, continually amazed by the goodness of God and the power of Christ, that is what we are after.

The church has programs, of course, for fostering knowledge: Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, the Adult Forum.

We worry that they are sparsely and intermittently attended at times.

But what are we doing to foster love?

And what are we doing to astound and amaze, to lead people to the stunning recognition of the Christ?

Much, frankly, though I am afraid we are slow to see it.

You make great sacrifices for each other and for Christ in the context of the church.

You endure the irritating, love the less than loveable, deplete your checking account, give up your warm bed on Sunday morning.

You accept a story not of your own making, in the midst of a world that tells you you are your own author.

It is amazing what God leads you to do, and it is evidence of a great love.

Don't let the fact that we have been doing this for a while blind you to the wonder and love evident in the Jesus people who gather here.

None of this would happen without the presence and power and love of God.

Whatever else you know, know the amazing, astounding love of God in Jesus Christ and make that the foundation of anything else you would learn.