




Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Son of Man who will come again in the clouds with great power and glory, amen.

There's been a lot of media time spent over the past couple of years talking about the mishandling of classified documents.  (SLIDE) It's easy to identify classified information because it always has a bright red cover sheet something like this. "Scooter" Libby back in the Clinton Administration was caught removing classified information in his socks and underwear. Then there was Hillary Clinton and her classified emails and server. Skipping forward to our current cases we have both President Biden and former President Trump embattled over their handling of classified information. Back in my Air Force days when dealing with classified documents and information, even those who possessed the highest Top Secret clearances could only have access to data and information they needed to know in order to do their jobs.  (SLIDE) Access was granted only to those individuals with a need to know.


Need to know isn't a hard concept. I'm certain you all practice this concept in your families. I know we don't tell our children every detail of our lives. When our children were small we shielded them for example, from any financial difficulties, or from certain family illnesses or troubles. If the concept of need to know works for our earthly children, it works for the Children of God as well.


If we look at the universe God created, there's so much information we simply don't know. Maybe we live on a God given "need to know" basis when it comes to the secrets of the cosmos. I mean we know a lot already. When you think about the total knowledge and data in the known universe we already know a lot and our knowledge is increasing year after year. This total amount of data or knowledge has been theoretically calculated by people way smarter than me... These scientists look at data and data storage in terms of bits and bytes. I'm sure you've all heard of kilobytes, megabytes, and even gigabytes. We have a network storage drive hooked up to our Church Computers that can hold 4 Terabytes. To give you an idea of how large these numbers can get here's a chart that shows the progression of size increments used in modern computer storage jargon. (SLIDE)




I always wondered what comes after the Terabyte. The largest term for data storage I could find is the Zettabyte. One Zettabyte is a one followed by 21 zeros. One Zettabyte equals a trillion Gigabytes. That's a lot of zeros and a lot of data. I found another chart that shows how the amount of data has grown since 2010 and what's projected for through 2025.  (SLIDE) If we look at the year 2024 you can see the amount of data in the world was calculated to be in the ballpark of 147 Zettabytes. That's more than 315 times the total grains of sand on the earth!

My point here is that no single human being can possibly know everything, despite what all children believe... So, if someone tells you that you're on a


“need-to-know” basis and you don’t need to know, you shouldn’t get offended. Just understand there’s so much information out there that maybe the less you know, the better off you’ll be...  (SLIDE) God keeps us on a “need-to-know” basis as well. In Acts 1:7, Jesus tells his disciples that there are some things they do not need to know. “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.” In the final speech Jesus made to the Disciples before his passion in John’s Gospel, chapter 16, verse 12, Jesus said, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” God doesn’t withhold information from us just to keep us in the dark, but just like a perfect parent, God shields us from harmful information, from information overload, and from things we just can’t understand.

There are some things we need to know. There were things the disciples needed to know. In the first part of our reading Jesus is telling the disciples things they are going to need to know.  (SLIDE) Things like watching out for false Messiahs or not worrying about things like wars and rumors of wars. In the section that was left out of our reading for today, between verse 8 and 24, Jesus continues to let the disciples in on things they are going to need to know. The stuff we didn’t read this morning are things like being handed over to councils and being beaten in the synagogues and killed for the sake of the Gospel. The disciples needed to know this stuff because they needed to know the sacrifices they are

going to have to make to follow Jesus Christ. When I read the part we left out today I cringed at what Jesus was saying. I mean brother killing brother and parents betraying their own children to the Roman authorities just for claiming and loving Jesus...

This whole discussion started because the disciples, acting like little children on their first trip to a big city, are totally impressed with the size of the building blocks.  (SLIDE) I remember the first time I went to New York City. I was probably more childlike than the disciples. We rode up the elevator to the top of the Empire State building in the fastest elevator I've ever been on. I was really impressed... When the disciples muse to Jesus about the grandeur of the whole Temple structure, Jesus was not quite so impressed. Remember this was not His first trip to the big city of Jerusalem. At the ripe old age of 12, when He was inadvertently left behind at the Temple, Jesus was already conducting seminars and workshops on Theology for the Rabbis ... So, Jesus lets the disciples in on a little bit of a secret. All these big, beautiful building stones will be thrown down and this Temple will be destroyed, but don't worry, this is just the birthing process for the new creation.

So, what information can we glean from this story that can help us live our lives today? What do we need to know? First, we need to know that false shepherds exist. False shepherds are always lurking — looking for sheep to fleece.

Be cautious, Jesus, says. You need to know no one knows more than you do right now. He will go on to say neither he nor the angels know what is known only to God. So, be careful about charismatic leaders who claim to have knowledge no one else has. Secondly, we need to know faithfulness to God is not about buildings, regardless of their size. The temple was beautiful. No doubt about it. But the temple of stone and marble was destroyed. All that remains today is a small portion of the wall.  (SLIDE) Yet, the church of Jesus Christ is alive and well in the world, even though the Temple was destroyed in the year 70 AD. We may worship in buildings, but God does not live in buildings made by human hands. God dwells anywhere and everywhere, but also in the human heart. We need to know life is linear. In other words, it's not circular. Life doesn't keep going round and round in meaningless and repetitious circles of suffering and despair. Rather, it is headed toward a culminating point — a point about which we know very little. There was a beginning, and there will be an end and our loving God did not create us to languish indefinitely with the consequences of our sin. God is a God of history and one day God is going to wrap things up. This is our hope. Jesus told the disciples when the temple comes down, it is not the end, but only the beginning of the “birth pangs” ... The end is still to come, and then a new beginning. We need to know there is no cause for alarm. Sometimes when



everything is falling apart, coming down, things are really, maybe for the first time, finally coming together.

When I was in the Air Force during Desert Storm, the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumstein famously said when it come to our knowledge, (SLIDE)



“...there are known knowns; which are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know.

As I began this Sermon, I showed you the sum total of what scientists calculate to be all the information or data we know and can store. 147 Zettabytes is a lot of knowns, but we still don't know it all. I read where that 147 Zettabytes comprises only about 1% of the data stored in human DNA. My friends there's a lot we still don't know that may never be revealed to us, but, you can rest assured God knows it all. With God there are no unknowns. So, what should we do?

First, and most important, keep calm.  (SLIDE) Sometimes that's hard to do, but Jesus reminds us over and over to not let your hearts be troubled. Second, be alert and watchful. Martin Luther once said we should stay alert like a dog watching the meat. I like cloudy days because Jesus said he would return on the clouds in great power and glory.  (SLIDE) I don't need to know when that

day will happen, but I pray every day, “Come Lord Jesus,” then I look at the clouds to see if I can see Jesus. May that be our prayer today. Come Lord Jesus, Amen.