When You Don't Realize…

Are You Sure about What You Know?

Recently I spotted two mice sprinting from behind my bookshelf to hide behind my desk. One is bad, two mice in the office is terrible. I set traps to catch them and within a few days I did catch one. I hoped the other had fled my office, but I was not sure, so I left out the mouse traps. Five days later the second mouse was caught and I was greatly relieved. I was done with mice hiding in my office. However, the very next day I saw a flash of movement from one part of the office and then it was gone. Within seconds, not sure if it was a third mouse I saw, the mouse shot out from behind a bookshelf and I saw it clearly, then the mouse flew back behind the same bookshelf. I did not realize there were three mice camped in my office, I just thought there were two…and now I am wondering if there might be more than that! I read that electrons are like mice, only even more mysterious. We used to think electrons flew about in nice little orbitals and although they were quick, we could locate them with the proper equipment. That is not true. We never know where electrons are at any given moment, we just know where they have been. How many of us find the workings of God to be a great mystery? Men and women of all ages and nationalities wonder about what God is doing and how He will act in matters of great importance to them. The truth is there is much going on in our world that we don't realize when it comes to the hand of God and even the disciples did not understand many times what God was doing. Our big idea for today is this. God is for you.

The Bible shows us just how tough it is to be certain of what to expect from God. As we know, "His ways are not our ways!" In John 12 we have the record of just how oblivious the disciples were to what God was doing. What they saw happening with Jesus they had no idea was actually a fulfillment of earlier prophecies. **The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.** (John 12:12-16 NIV) The disciples did not realize that what they saw was fitting into God's plan for Jesus. Is it surprising that the disciples did not realize how the Bible explained what God was doing with Jesus? It is not unusual for even God's people to not realize what the Lord is actually doing with them and with those they love.

I have never known what to make of the account of the two disciples of Jesus who were walking along the road from Jerusalem to the small town of Emmaus Easter Sunday. Nearly the entire way they walked with Jesus and did not realize it was Him. **When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.** (Luke 24:30-31 NIV) Do you think we ever miss what God is doing around us or miss noticing God with us? Something similar happened with a loyal disciple of Elisha. When a vast army of Arameans came upon the Israelite town of Dothan wanting to capture Elisha or even to kill him, the servant was panicked because he did not realize the sort of protection they had which God was providing. **And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.** (2 Kings 6: 17 NIV) We don't know what kept Elisha's servant from seeing the armies of God. It was of course the Lord who enabled him to see them. Would we be surprised to discover that the Lord keeps us from seeing certain things so that we have to walk more by faith and trust Him?

When Samuel was a young boy living in the temple of the Lord, Samuel did not realize the Lord could speak directly to him. One evening God called to Samuel but the boy didn't know it was God and went over to Eli, his guardian who was also the high priest, to see what he wanted. However it was not Eli who was calling him and Eli sent Samuel back to bed. This happened two more times and finally Eli realized what was happening. **The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy.** (1 Samuel 3: 8 NIV) Is it just Samuel who does not realize when the Lord is speaking to them? Of course this is a unique case of God calling out to Samuel in a physically audible way, but it is not unique in this sense of the human experience. God has promised to lead us and instruct our way and most of us never know He is doing it because we are caught up in a non-God approach to life. Here is the promise given to God's people. **"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way;**

walk in it." (Isaiah 30: 21 NIV) It is right there for us. In a way we can't quite categorize, God promises to guide us. But despite Him telling you He will do it, do you realize in real time that is happening? The historical account of Sarah and her preparation for being a mother at the age of ninety is so very human. When God physically came into the camp of Abraham and Sarah and announced Sarah would have a baby, she did not believe Him. She laughed instead. **Then the Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"** (Genesis 18: 10-12 NIV) If you can't relate to Sarah's reaction to God's declaration, then you probably haven't examined yourself very closely. Abraham of course accepted without reservation the Lord's promise to them but don't be too quick to assume you would have responded just as he did. Abraham is held up throughout the Bible and particularly in the New Testament as the supreme example of faith. In other words, he is a rare and stunning model of how faith looks when we are walking with God.

There is something quite intriguing to me and perhaps to you too in the account of the resurrection. The first time Jesus came to the disciples in the closed and locked room Easter evening, of all the disciples, Thomas was not there. **Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.** (John 20: 24 NIV) The disciples, like kids who just found out they were given a new Ferrari for Christmas, quickly shared with Thomas the great news that Jesus was alive. However, Thomas would have none of it. **So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."** (John 20: 25 NIV) Thomas of course did not realize it was true. But Jesus did something that is just astounding and a great revelation to us all of His practical concern for us. Jesus came to the disciples once more, in the exact same room He first met with them and once more on a Sunday, the very next Sunday and it was when Thomas was there too. Do you see the perfect attention to detail…as well as how much Jesus was for Thomas? Rather than leaving Thomas stranded among the disciples as the lone unbeliever, Christ brought him into the fold by providing the same belief package He did for the others just a week earlier.

I wonder if Thomas realized, before that Sunday, just how much God was for him. The Bible states clearly that God is for you too. For some it may seem unclear how true this is but here is the declaration. **What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?** (Romans 8: 31 NIV) This statement is in the Greek a first class conditional sentence. That means that grammatically it is telling you this is so. Another way to put it is this. "Since God is for us, who can be against us. God is for you. God was for Thomas. God was for Sarah. God was for the servant of Elisha and God is for you. You may not realize it. This may still be fuzzy in your brain because of some of your experiences. But it is so. God is for you. And whatever comes your way, whether hardship or troubles or disappointments or trials, God is for you. This is the proof the Lord has for you that it is so. **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** (Romans 8: 32 NIV) Here is our big idea. God is for you. He has left no doubt this is true.