

ONE-MINUTE DEVOTIONS FOR THE CHURCH MUSICIAN

+ January 29, 2012 +

For Sunday, January 29 (Epiphany 4): Mark 1:21-28

The desire for knowledge is one of our culture's strongest impulses. We hunger for news. We thirst for statistics. Armed with facts and figures, we impress our hundreds or thousands of Facebook friends and Twitter followers with our well-informed posts.

Why do we not hunger and thirst in this same way to know God? Could it be because we don't know *how* to know God?

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up," Paul cautions us in 1 Corinthians 8:1-2 "Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge..." In Deuteronomy 18 God condemns those who claim falsely to know God – the false prophets. And, in a delightful irony, the unclean spirit's insult hurled at Jesus -- "I know who you are, the Holy One of God," and indeed he does -- proves to be his undoing: "But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!"

How can we cultivate true knowledge? Psalm 111 opens the path: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This is not conventional fear but instead the acknowledgment of God as Lord, as in Luther's explanation of the first commandment: "We are to fear, love, and trust God in all things." To know God is to love God fully, and to be loved – and known – in return. As Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 8:3: "...but anyone who loves God is known by him."

In our choices of hymnody, let us strive to select those Christ-centered texts which take us further down the path to true wisdom and open us to receive God's mercy and the boundless grace that comes to us through the cross.