

Who Is God?

What Does the Bible Teach?

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I told you last time that we were going to start a series on what we teach and last time we answered the question, “Why do we believe the Bible?” We answered that question with two simple words: Jesus Christ is why we believe the Bible. Jesus is the one who affirmed the Old Testament; he's the one who pre-authenticated the New Testament; and we received the Bible from the authority of Jesus Christ himself, the one whom Ephesians 1 says in “above all rule and authority” throughout the universe. There is no higher authority than Jesus Christ. We take him at his word and when he lays his hands, as it were, on the 66 books of the Bible, we know that we are on solid ground. We don't rely on our own judgment about the truthfulness of Scripture. We take this truthfulness of Scripture on the authority of Christ and as we read it, it commends itself to our hearts as the very word of God so we are very grateful to Christ and we're grateful to the Lord for having the Scriptures and that is the foundation, the cornerstone of everything about Truth Community.

As we go forward now in the rest of this series on what we teach, we're going to consider the question this morning, “Who is God?” Who is God? Now, it's a very ambitious goal to try to answer that question in one hour and the truth of the matter is that we can't do justice to that question if we spent the rest of our lifetime simply considering the attributes of God. What we're trying to do here today is simply paint a framework; we're trying to establish a little bit of a framework so that we understand the direction that we're going as a church as we look forward to the future. We're setting a trajectory here with this message. We're not trying to answer every single question, we just want to set a framework to think rightly about God. If we realize, if we understand as a church, why we receive the authority of Scripture, if that's clear in our minds that this is not based on a personal preference, that we receive the Scripture on the testimony and authority of Christ, if we have a sense of who God is and we pursue in that direction then we are going to be positioned for the blessing of God because God is going to honor those who honor his word, he's going to honor those who honor his name. That's all we care about. We're not trying to establish the biggest church in any place; we don't care about the numbers of that at all. We're not trying to be the biggest, not trying to be the best in one sense, we're just trying to be biblical. That's what we care about. We want to honor the word of God and let him do with that what he deems to be best and so that's what we're setting the course for in this series entitled “What do we teach at Truth Community?”

Today we've come to the question, “Who is God?” Someone once said that there are two starting points to true knowledge: the first starting point is to acknowledge that there is a God and the second starting point is to acknowledge that you are not he. There is a God and you're not him. From that starting point, everything else will flow. That establishes God on his throne and puts us underneath his authority. You see, beloved, the interpretive key to life is the very character of God. If you think God is a jolly grandfather who is just benignly disposed to bless everyone no matter how they conduct themselves, you're going to go in one direction and you're going to end up living a very flippant superficial life if you think that God has only kindness as we define it in his character. If you think that God simply exists to make your life go well, you're going to have a very distorted, warped view that is not going to serve you well as you go through life.

Now, we need to know God for who he really is. You see, we don't have the freedom, we don't have the liberty to define God like we would like him to be. That's not our prerogative. He's God and we're not and so just as you wouldn't want anyone to come up to you who never you, who had never met you, and tell you what you are like, in the same way, to a much greater, more infinite degree, we do not have the liberty to make God out who we want him to be. We can't make him be what we think, we have to go to his self-disclosure in the Scriptures, we have to go to his revelation. He has made himself known and so our job is simply to submit to that and to see who he has declared himself to be and we need to start from the Scriptures that Christ had authenticated and see what they say about the character of God.

You know, the question that we're answering here today, "Who is God?" is a question that Scripture itself raises and answers. The prophet Micah at the end of his great prophecy said this in Micah 7:18, he said, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love." Who is God? The question is so basic and yet the question, "Who is God?" transcends time, space and history. It transcends our individual lives. Once our little wisp of time is over, the great character of God is going to be enduring on. He will reign no matter what happens with us in the ensuing days. The question, "Who is God?" the answer to that question is more important than your individual life. It's more important than the things that you have scheduled for the coming week. It is more important than our life and death. Who God is is the defining question of the universe and it's the only question that ultimately matters.

God and God alone is the most important person in the universe and our question today is the question that needs to be answered and it is our privilege to be able to look at what God has said about himself and to answer the question on his terms, not on ours. I don't want God to be what I would like him to be, do you? I don't want him to be what you'd like him to be. I want God to be who he is and I want to understand him on his terms. I want to know him for who he really is even if that means I have to change, even if that means that I need to adjust my thinking, even if that means that I need to change my life. In answer to the question, "Who is God?" is of transcendent importance and it's our duty to line ourselves up under that answer, not to line God up with our desires because we're not important by comparison. God is the one who matters. God is the one who is supreme and so we come with humble spirits as we seek to answer this question, "Who is God?"

I'm going to give you four points to help you answer that, to frame our answer to that question here this morning. First of all, "Who is God?" let's start with this particular point: 1. God is an eternal spirit. God is an eternal spirit. He's not like us. The very essence of God is invisible. The very essence of God is spiritual. The divine nature is not made of physical matter that we can see with our eyes. It is something other than us. It is something different, separate. We must think of God not by looking at ourselves and projecting ourselves on him, we must look at what the word of God says and adjust our thinking accordingly. Jesus said in John 4:24, we won't turn there; we won't turn to all of the passages that I allude to here today. But I'll try to give you enough time to jot them down in your notes. Jesus said in John 4:24 that "God is spirit." The very essence, the very nature of God is spiritual not physical and Jesus said that a spirit does not have flesh and bones, Luke 24:39, which he was saying after his resurrection. God is an eternal spirit. He had no beginning. Of all of the great things about God, that is the one that always stops me personally in my tracks. I can't contemplate a being that had no beginning. Everything that we see around us had a starting point, God didn't. There was no beginning with him because he existed always. There was never a time where God was not.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy. We're going to look at a couple of passages here. 1 Timothy 1. I'll give you a moment to turn there. As we think about the privilege that is ours to be a Christian, to have our sins forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we are quickly led into, if we're following the thinking, the flow of thought of the writers of Scripture, we're quickly led into the eternal character of God as we do. Look at 1 Timothy 1:15, the Apostle Paul said, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." Let me stop right there and say this to some of you who need to hear it: I realize that you've been living a life of sin and iniquity and neglecting the character of God in the way that you've structured your life and your thinking and as we contemplate the

character of God here this morning, that is going to have a convicting sense on your spirit, it is going to convict you of guilt and it should. It is unthinkable that you would live your life in total disregard of the God who is an eternal spirit, who had no beginning and will have no end. That is a cosmic crime to rebel against God at such a fundamental level that you don't line your life up underneath his authority and his character. That's a crime of cosmic proportions. I don't know how you live with yourselves except that I, myself, lived that way for quite a long time myself.

But as we come to the character of God, it's going to convict you of the guilt of living in rebellion against him. Here's why I emphasize that: look back at verse 16. As Paul is talking about the fact that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, he does that as a foundation of hope for you and me. He says in verse 16 that, "I," meaning Paul, "found mercy, so that Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." The gospel goes out to you this morning with the patience and the love and grace of God saying, "Despite your past rebellion, I am still willing to receive you as a sinner. I am still willing to receive you and give you eternal life to give you the forgiveness of your sins. I did it with Paul, I'll do it for you too." What a gracious, lovely God this is to do that.

Now, here's my point: those of us that are in Christ, that embrace that, that thank God that he came and he saved us as sinners, he gave us eternal life, look where the Apostle Paul goes having just given a snapshot of his own testimony. When you, as a believer, a redeemed child of God, contemplate the reality of your salvation, contemplate the mercy that Christ has shown on your soul, your thoughts should immediately go to the eternal nature of God and worship him. That's exactly what Paul does in verse 17. He just said, "Christ saved me," now in verse 17, he worships. He says, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." Your disposition of worship toward God should be driven by the reality of your salvation and by the fact that God is an eternal spirit, immortal, invisible, and that should cause you to bow, to fall on your face, as it were, and worship him and give him glory because he is so different from us. He is so great, he is so perfect, he is so glorious and majestic that the only right thing for you and me to do is to bow down and worship him. To not trifle with his greatness with an indifferent heart, with a life of sin, with neglect of his word. Don't trifle with this great eternal spirit. He is immortal. He is invisible. He is eternal. He is the only God and he sees us. We must worship him, this great eternal spirit.

Look over at 1 Timothy 6 where Paul goes back to similar themes and see how the inspired apostle worships, see the sober way in which he regards the truth of the gospel and the truth of the word of God and the great character of God. It is so sober. It is so serious. It is so reverential. 1 Timothy 6:13, Paul says, "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things," there is a statement of your utter dependence on the character of God for your next breath, "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." We're under a solemn charge, a holy obligation to honor the word of God, to keep it to the utmost of our ability without stain or reproach until Christ returns.

But keeping in mind that our point here is that God is an eternal spirit, look at what Paul says in verse 15, "which He will bring about at the proper time – He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen." Worship in response to the eternality of God. Worship in response to his invisible nature, his immortal nature, the one who dwells in unapproachable light. This character of God drives us to reverence and worship. This invisible spirit who is God existed before creation and will have no end. We can think back to the beginning of time and that doesn't go back far enough. We can think into the future and in misty ways contemplate eternity. It's all clear to God. No beginning. No end. An eternal spirit.

Now, just a little bit of insight in terms of what that means for the way that we worship. The invisible nature of God that underlies the second commandment against graven images, about using images in the worship of God, if you think about it, you can see why that would necessarily be the case. If God is an invisible spirit, then it is impossible for a physical object to accurately represent him. Physical objects, paintings and statues and all of that, could never properly communicate to us the nature of God. It can only

pervert and distort who he is and so those who use images to supposedly aid and abet their worship are only using that which draws them away from the true nature of God. That's why the best of churches are simple in their worship, they're simple in the adornment of where they gather together to worship. It's because there's nothing on earth that can properly picture this eternal spirit. God's an eternal spirit. We worship him in response to that.

Secondly. I don't know you about you but I love the way that the truth about who God is, the truth of his character, takes us out of the realm of this world and puts us in a mental dimension that is completely different than anything that we see around us. I like that. It testifies to the truth of who God is that as we look at what Scripture is, that it doesn't lead us back to something that looks like us. Secondly: God is the Creator of heaven and earth. God is an eternal spirit, point 1. Point 2, God is the Creator of heaven and earth. Scripture teaches that God made heaven and earth in six 24 hour days. The Bible does not use evolution and millions of years to explain our origins. It simply states in Genesis 1:1 that, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and then goes through six evenings and mornings: the next day, the next day, the next day. It's a travesty that people who claim in the name of God, seek to pervert that and make it something other than what a literal straight-forward reading of the text would be. Our origins are not shrouded in mystery in the sense that millions and billions of years would make it. No, our origins are explained quite clearly for us in the first chapter of Genesis which Jesus, himself, affirmed. You can't deny the first chapter of Genesis without making a direct assault on Christ. If you're going to do that, you might as well take a dagger and try to stab him because his own veracity underlies the testimony of Genesis 1. God is the Creator of heaven and earth. All of life traces its origin to God. Everything that we see follows back and goes back to that common source.

Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible." Think about it: somehow an invisible, eternal spirit spoke and commanded visible temporal things to come into being. How do we understand that? We don't have that creative power to do anything like that. If we did, I would speak "hamburger" and things would change. God speaks and a vast immeasurable universe comes into being. God speaks and man appears by his creative activity. Now listen: that has implications. That has consequences for you and me. It imposes upon us and if you wonder why people object to it, here you go: it imposes upon us a duty, an obligation, a responsibility of worship. We must worship the one who created us. His role as Creator imposes upon you and upon me a duty of allegiance to him because our very existence derives from his hand. Apart from him, we would be nothing. We would not exist.

So we must worship him and another thing that it does in terms of our inner being and the very nature and the attitude with which we carry about life, this is completely humbling. Turn over to the book of Job 38. I just want to show you something briefly. You are, no doubt, familiar with the story of Job. He was a righteous man. Satan accused him. God gave Satan access and Satan basically destroyed him to within an inch of his life. Job wrestled with that, "Why is this happening to me?" He got some bad interaction from some so-called friends and Job is just pleading for an opportunity to lay his case before God. We come to Job 38 and God, after allowing a lot of discourse going back and forth, steps in and speaks and he addresses Job. Look at 38:1, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!'" Here's what I want you to do, beloved, here's what I want you to do as we look at this passage: I want you to put yourself in the shoes of Job and let the questions that God is asking become that which addresses your own soul because only then is the power of God being an eternal spirit, of God being the Maker of heaven and earth, going to have the proper effect on your heart. God comes to us and says, "Okay, instruct me."

Verse 4, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?" How did God do it? Where were you when he did? We weren't there. We couldn't have done it by our own power. We weren't there. We don't understand how he hangs the world on nothing, how he moves the planets and the solar systems with mathematical precision. He runs an entire universe this way. He created this way and we can't begin to fathom the wisdom and power that lies behind such a majestic act of creative

power. Imagine God upholding billions of stars. Imagine if he just handed you the key to one planet and said, "You uphold this." We'd have no idea what to do with that. We would be instantly reduced to utter humiliation. We can't govern the bodies of heaven. God does it without effort. That's power. That's the nature of the Creator.

So this is just extremely humbling. We might get caught up in the little earthly accomplishments that we achieve, different ranks and things that we do, but it's utterly humiliating to compare them to the great majesty of the God of the Bible and that's the only way that we start to see ourselves properly, to see ourselves humbled before unspeakable, unfathomable greatness in his creative power. Who is God? He is the Creator of heaven and earth, an eternal spirit who made everything that we see around us except for sin and so we worship him. We worship him for his intrinsic greatness. We humble ourselves before him. We understand that we have an obligation of worship, of allegiance, because our life is derivative from him. So as we start to answer the question, "Who is God?" you quickly see that the better we answer that question, the greater he looks and the smaller we feel and that's exactly what should happen. That is exactly what the contemplation of God should do to man and any contemplation of God that doesn't lead to that is not a true contemplation of him.

Thirdly, as we continue to answer the question, "Who is God?" we're going to answer it this way. Third point this morning: God is great. God is great and it's hard to find words that haven't been so diluted by usage that actually are fitting to describe our great God with. "That was a great movie. That was a great time at the show, at the restaurant," whatever. We've so diluted that word that it's meaningless almost but when we say God is great, we're not saying it's really good to have him around, we're saying, "God is great!" There is an explosive greatness to the person and character of God that should utterly disarm our thinking. It should shatter our sense of well-being. It should shatter our view of the world that the God of the Bible is so astoundingly, amazingly, astonishingly great. God's greatness surpasses our ability to understand. It surpasses our ability to investigate. You could put it this way: the greatness of God dwarfs us. Psalm 145:3 says, "Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable." We quickly get lost in the vast ocean of the majesty and greatness of God and all we can do really is just take a little thimble and fish out a little bit of that essence here in a message like this this morning. We get a taste of it truly but we don't get a taste of it exhaustively, you might say.

I want to help you think about God's greatness with three subpoints here. First of all: God is omnipotent. In what way is God great? Well, first of all, he is omnipotent by which we mean that he is all-powerful, by which we mean that he has the power to do whatever he pleases. It's not that God can do absolutely anything because God cannot lie, Titus 1:2 tells us. He could never contradict his own promises. He has the power to do and to implement whatever he pleases, is what the doctrine of omnipotence means rightly understood. Jeremiah 32:17 says this, "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You." God overthrows nations. He raised Christ from the dead. He will banish the supernatural devil into perdition forever. He will bring an end to this present age and usher in a new heavens and earth. Ha! He's so powerful, he is so great and mighty that if you're a Christian, he overcame your stubborn rebellion against him and turned you into a lover of Christ. That's power! He pulled back the blinders from your self-deception and showed you the truth. He did a work in your heart that changed it from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh. That's power. That's greatness.

You know, I think about this a lot as a pastor, as we look forward to what the future of our church has, I don't really worry a lot about the strategies or anything like that because Christ said, "I will build my church." The future prosperity of Truth Community does not depend on the works of our hands. God is able to do what is necessary to bless us according to what he wants to accomplish. We don't have to sweat it. We rest in his omnipotence and let me make it more personal to you, knowing how we as elders pray for you to be perfected in your spiritual growth: we have confidence in God to do that. We even have confidence for those of you that we know are living in rebellion against God and turning your back on him. We are completely dependent and we are completely confident in God's ability to overcome even your stubborn heart. We're not intimidated away by your stubborn refusal to hear. We just keep praying and trusting that an omnipotent God will turn your heart in response to our prayers and we wait on him to do that. We revere the omnipotence of God more than we fear the stubbornness of your own heart. That's how

great the omnipotence of God is. That's the thing that we put our hope in. I can say this honestly: I don't put any hope in my eloquence as a speaker to turn your heart. I have no confidence in that. I know that that's utterly useless but if the Spirit of God would do a work in your heart, then it will overcome even your resistance. The power of God to create that which is seen from that which is unseen. The power of God to rescue a rebellious soul. God is omnipotent. He is great!

That's why for those of you that are perhaps new to our philosophy and ministry, we don't feel the need to badger people, to manipulate people, to make some kind of verbal response to the preaching. That's totally unnecessary. We call you, we invite you, we ask you to come to Christ as is appropriate but we don't feel the need to try to trick you into something. We lay the truth of God out and trust the powerful Spirit of God to work on your stony heart and we trust that our prayers are not in vain. Here's the thing, beloved: this isn't a game. This isn't a game. We're not doing this simply so we've got our own place to come and worship. We're not doing this because we want to do it just a little bit different than what the next church down the corner does. No, no, we're just trying to honor the greatness of God through being faithful to his word and trusting him to do what he wants. There is no other strategy. There is no hidden agenda. We trust in the omnipotence of God and when our hearts are broken over the spiritual indifference that some of you show, this is our refuge. This is where we go back to. We realize that God worked in our hearts over a long period of time and into our adult years before we came to Christ and that gives us hope that he's not done working on you either. This is the refuge of biblical ministry is the omnipotence of God because we utterly confess and gladly announce and proclaim that we don't have the power to change anyone. But we have complete confidence in the power of God that he who made the heavens can make new life in your heart as well.

Just so you know, when you walk into this room, when you walk into a service of Truth Community, that has been the prayer of the elders that you walk into. That environment that in which we come together to worship is one where we have asked God to exercise his omnipotence upon your stony heart, to peel back the deception and the rebellion and convict you of sin. To convict you of the glory and the saving power of Christ that you would gladly embrace him.

God is great by which we mean he's omnipotent. Secondly, God is omniscient. God is omniscient. Omni (all) knowledge. God knows all things past, present and future. He can do that because he appointed the end from the beginning. He sustains the universe with wisdom. He has solutions to every problem. And in a way that is totally unsettling, Scripture says that he knows our inner man. Turn over to Psalm 139. You see, you can talk about the greatness of God on this macro-scale that we've been talking about, at this level of the universe and the orbits of the heavenly bodies and that's one level of greatness and power and majesty but then you realize as you continue reading on in Scripture that it goes to this micro-level of knowing us in perfect intimacy as well. We see that in the first four verses of Psalm 139. Look at them with me. "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all."

When I was a new Christian and I first read that verse 4, "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all," I started to talk real fast in case I could get just a little bit ahead of it. That's totally useless. Look at that, beloved: he is intimately acquainted with all your ways. Before there was a word on your tongue, he knows it all. He knows everything about you. For those of you that are earnestly seeking to walk with Christ and sometimes falter, God sees the big picture and is gracious toward that. Christian, God knows the worst about you and still loves you and still sent Christ to redeem you from some of the dark things that are represented in this room that none of us would even want to hear about. God knew it all and still sent Christ to save you. How vast must his mercy be if he knows the worst about you and still sent Christ to redeem you? He's intimately acquainted with all your ways. Your salvation could never have been about you meeting a standard because God knows you never met it to begin with. That's why he sent Christ, to be a substitute who would meet the standard on your behalf and shed his blood to take away the penalty of that which you had broken.

Beloved, take heart in this omniscience of God knowing that he understands. He knows the best about you even when men reject you and misrepresent you. This is the refuge of our heart. It's in his power. It's in his

omniscience. We rest in that in the midst of a world that misjudges us and in a world where we have transgressed the command of God ourselves and I just think it seems particularly fitting today to continue to address those of you who are just flaming hypocrites in our midst right now. It's just necessary for us to address this in light of this omniscient character of God. It is totally meaningless that you can fool me or the elders or your family with your pretend external behavior. God sees right into the very core of your heart and sees the hypocrisy there in which you refuse to bend the knee, in which you have no interest of that and you simply love yourself more than anyone else. He sees all of it. It's laid bare before him. So your game playing is an utter waste of time and it only compounds your sin as though somehow your hypocrisy would get past the omniscient seeing eye of God.

You see, the character of God forces us into a life reality that causes us to stop playing games. It brings the weight of guilt upon us because we understand that it has not escaped notice and it leaves us shattered before a holy God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and left with nothing but an appeal to his mercy and goodness and the shed blood of Christ as the only hope of our soul. You see, beloved, when we start to answer the question, "Who is God?" we can't help but have a framework by which we better understand the motions of our own soul. Scripture says that it's all open and laid bare before him with whom we have to do and the only way that a preacher of the word of God can help you is to lay that out in its unvarnished, undiminished, undiluted truth. A preacher of the word of God does you no good when he flatters you about your supposed human goodness. You need to see the truth. You need to have this brought to bear on your heart. You need to stop resisting it you hypocrites. You need to stop resisting and bow your knee before this holy, powerful, omnipotent, omnipresent God who is intimately acquainted with all your ways. Would you really go before the throne of his holiness without a Mediator? Without a Redeemer? Without the Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ pleading on your behalf? You are not ready for that moment, my friends. You're not ready to be in front of a holy, omniscient God if you have not received Christ.

You see, we're talking about such profound truths. One writer talks about preaching as standing between two worlds. That's what we're doing right now, we're standing between two worlds: the eternal world, the unseen realities of judgment and salvation that are still yet to be experienced in their fullness and where you're sitting today. I'm pleading with you, I'm pleading with you to take this seriously. I'm pleading with you to come to Christ. It is the only hope of your soul and I'll confess to a measure of selfishness as I do, as I plead with you to step out of your physical selfish world and into the realm of the kingdom of God through faith in Christ. I'll confess to an element of selfishness as I preach this way. Do you know what? I can't bear the thought of having been before you preaching the word of God, pointing you to Christ and then only to see that you're not in heaven with the rest of us when that day comes. I don't want that and if you don't care enough about your own soul, take account of the fact that Christ loved sinners enough to lay down his own life. If you're going to be trivial about your own soul okay, but don't be trivial about Christ, I beg you. I beg you. I beg you. This is true. This is real. And it would almost be crushing to the point of obliteration to think that some of you would just walk out and be unchanged by it. Can't bear the thought of it.

But when you hear truth like this, it becomes your responsibility to respond in repentance and faith to the Lord Jesus Christ. The accountability that you have for hearing this truth is too vast, it's too great. People think, people think that the worst, hottest places of hell are going to be reserved for mass murderers and child abusers and all of that. That's not true. That is not true. Scripture says that the most severe punishment will be, Hebrews 10:29, for "those who trampled underfoot the Son of God and regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant and insulted the Spirit of grace." The worst punishment is going to be for those of you that heard the gospel with clarity and turned away and rejected it. The guilt of that is incalculable. To have the forgiveness of your sins laid out before you, the gracious, tender call of Christ to, "Come to me for salvation," and for you to say, "No, that's not worthy of my time and attention. No, I will go on my own way." That kind of guilt is incalculable and those of you that are here today rejecting Christ, indifferent to the claims of the gospel, the greatest guilt in the universe is on your soul right now. I fear for you! I worry about you! My soul weeps over you and prays for you along with the other elders in our church. Yeah, we're trying to lay a doctrinal foundation for our future church but God have mercy, some of you don't care. I can't calculate that.

You see in the omniscience of God that he knows. There are no secrets before him. He's great. He's omnipotent. He's omniscient. Thirdly, God is omnipresent. You should still be in Psalm 139. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere present in his creation even though he's separate and distinct from it. Psalm 139:7, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me." God is present. Our communion with God transcends physical boundaries. You'll never hear me talk about our new church building across the river as the house of God. There is no house that holds God. There is a place where his people meet. Solomon talked about the temple not holding God, well, how much less a 20 year old building on five acres in eastern Cincinnati? I hope the house of God is a little greater than that, don't you? As grateful as I am to anticipate moving in there. No, God is omnipresent. He's equally present at church, work, home, land, and sea. There is no place that we can go where God is not. Christian, though your friends and family may reject you, you're never alone. Psalm 23, one of the great statements in all of Scripture, is based on the omnipresence of God. David said in Psalm 23:4, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil." Why? "For you are with me." You are right there with me, O God, so that even death doesn't frighten me. Even the hostility of man doesn't deter me. That's where the omnipresence of God takes you.

God: omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. These attributes which we have not given justice to, teach us that God is sovereign. God has the independence and the power to do as he pleases. He controls his creation so that his will is perfectly accomplished in all things. His greatness drives us to worship. But his greatness says something else for us. Imagine if you will, imagine that this great God with all power, all knowledge and all presence, imagine if he was different than what he is. Imagine if he was someone capricious and arbitrary and hostile toward us. What then? That would drive us to utter despair. That would drive a thinking man to suicide if that were true. There is just no way to reconcile yourself to that kind of power except for our final point this morning which just adds another infinite exponentially magnificent aspect to the character of God. We've said that he's an eternal spirit and that's totally foreign to our being. He's the Creator of heaven and earth. He established the world before we as a race existed. He's great! And yet, point 4: God is good. God is good. For all that he is, all of the divine prerogative that he would have and do whatever he wanted to, the character of God is good. Yeah, God's greatness would cause us despair if he were harsh and vindictive. But God is good.

We could discuss many attributes. We could and should talk about his truth and his mercy and his grace but I'm just going to mention two this morning. Two aspects of the goodness of God as we wrap this up here this morning. First of all, God is love. God is love and when the Bible speaks of God's love, it's not talking about a sentimental emotion, Hallmark greeting card kind of thing. God's love means that he works for the highest good of those upon whom he sets his affection and you could look at so much Scripture about this but the thing that brings it into crystal clear focus is found in 1 John 4. What do we mean when we say that God is love? Well, 1 John 4 is what we want to use to define that for us. 1 John 4. What is the love of God? How can we best define it? Well, praise be to God, we don't have to speculate. He's given it to us straight in his word. He tells us where he wants us to go when we think about the love of God and it's not about favorable earthly circumstances. That is virtually irrelevant compared especially to the glory of what we see here in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this," here we go, he's getting specific now, "by this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Verse 19, "We love, because He first loved us."

What's the love of God? Go to Calvary. See the Son of God sacrificing himself for your sins and mine and see the preeminent display of the love of God. God's love is seen in that while we were still sinners, Christ hung on a cross to redeem us. To redeem everyone who had ever trustingly, savingly believed in him. The Son of God, God himself, this eternal spirit, took on human flesh. What, to compel by force greater worship? No. He did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Do you know what that is, beloved? That's good. That's the best. That such a sovereign God would love to the point of self-sacrifice on a cross for guilty sinners like you and like me. You know, think with me for a minute:

everything that we've discussed here today is unsearchably great. It is incomprehensibly magnificent that God is an eternal spirit, is beyond our comprehension and it's great. It's truly, truly great and awesome. The fact that he's the Creator of heaven and earth is great. I mean, it's just beyond our capacity to comprehend. The fact that he's great is great. All powerful, all present, all knowing, that's great. I don't mean great because it's good for me, I mean that that's just great. That's unsearchable how great that is and then you come and you realize that you haven't even begun to exhaust his goodness with what we've already said. His goodness is unsearchably great.

That great God loved us and took on human flesh and sacrificed his own life for our redemption. Everything about the answer to the question, "Who is God?" is completely humbling, isn't it? He's so much unlike us, that's humbling. He was so good in our unworthiness to us and showed us his love. What is the love of God? It's Christ on a cross. That's the defining element of God's love for us. For you. For me. This is unsearchably great. That manner of goodness, that manner of kindness, that manner of mercy that would give us eternally the joys of his presence, reconciliation to him, to be created, to enjoy fellowship with, and to see face-to-face this great God, that's just so good. That's just so good. You know how it goes in human circles, some of you are guilty about this in that you have things and you want to keep them to yourself. You don't want to share them. Ha! God has all of this glory and he's sharing it. He's welcoming us into the presence at the cost of his own life and blood. There just comes a point where you just run out of words. You can't adequately magnify that kind of greatness. You can't adequately magnify that kind of goodness. We're just lost in wonder, awe and praise at the love of God.

Finally, God is holy. God is good in his love. God is good in his holiness. Holiness has two senses: God is holy in the sense that he is set apart from everything else; holiness also refers to his moral purity. He's so good that he's absolutely unstained by evil and sin. Habakkuk 1:13 says, the prophet is speaking to God and says, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." Even his holiness has a direct impact on your life. 1 Peter 1 says that you are to be holy for he is holy. The standard of the perfect purity of God in his utter detestation of all evil is what we're to be like.

The great pastor and theologian, James Montgomery Boice said this in this context, reflecting on the implications of the holiness of God for our own disposition and conduct, he said and I quote, "We must learn to hate sin or else we will learn to hate the God who requires a holy life from Christ's followers." The holiness of God means that we declare an all-out war on that remaining indwelling sin in our lives. It's not just to keep rules of conduct, it's tied in to the answer to the question that we're asking today, "Who is God?" He is holy. Do you know what? That means I need to be holy too.

So "Who is God?" Let's wrap it up here. God is an eternal spirit who is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is great and he is good. If we were to walk out with a final point of application it would be this: the answer to the question, "Who is God?" the nature of God calls for reverence. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Do you fear him? Then stop wasting your life on sensual passions and trivial pursuits. Get serious. Examine yourself. In light of everything that we've said here, do you fear him? Let me tell you something: your life is the answer to that question.

Bow with me in prayer.

Father, as we have contemplated your character, we've been tremendously humbled because you are just someone who is completely different from us and we honor you and we worship you for that. Father, at the same time, we thank you for the love of Christ, the love which sent Christ in the first place, the love which stayed attached to the cross that the full cup of the wrath of God could be drunk on our behalf. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you did that for us and we honor you and we worship you for it. We pray, Father, I pray for each one here. We've spoken so clearly and directly to those who don't know you. Father, as we do week-by-week, we pray for them, each one. Father, their indifference is sometimes even sketched on their faces as they sit under the preaching of your word. Have mercy on them just like you did on me and on so many in this room. Have mercy on them. Turn their hearts. Father, we can't bear the thought of one in this room being sent away at judgment. We want them all with us, Lord, every one of them and we appeal to your power, we appeal to your knowledge, we appeal to your presence, we appeal to the Spirit who knows

each heart and is sovereignly able to make an unwilling sinner willing to come to Christ. We ask you to exercise that work even now, even in this hour, even in this moment.

Father, we pray as a church as we go forward, as we continue to lay the foundation, as we look to a long-term future, Father, that you would help us be faithful to this great character of God revealed in this great word of God, affirmed by the authority of Christ. Help us to be faithful and, Lord, if you'll help us to be faithful, we'll be content with wherever and however you choose to bless that.

I pray for each one. I pray that the contemplation of the knowledge of God would be a rich encouragement as this day progresses and we thank you in Christ's name. Amen.