

2-14-2016 – The God We Worship – Transcendent God

Isaiah 55:9

Valentine's Day - -

A young woman was taking an afternoon nap. After she woke up, she told her husband, "I just dreamed that you gave me a pearl necklace for Valentine's Day. What do you think it means?"

"You'll know tonight," he said.

That evening, the man came home with a small package and gave it to his wife. Delighted, she opened it--only to find a book entitled "The meaning of dreams."

A guy walks into a post office one day to see a middle-aged, balding man standing at the counter methodically placing "Love" stamps on bright pink envelopes with hearts all over them. He then takes out a perfume bottle and starts spraying scent all over them.

His curiosity getting the better of him, he goes up to the balding man and asks him what he is doing. The man says, "I'm sending out one thousand Valentine cards signed, 'Guess who?'"

"But why?" asks the man.

"I'm a divorce lawyer," the man replies.

If you want your wife to listen and pay strict attention to every word you say, talk in your sleep.

A couple came upon a wishing well. The wife leaned over, made a wish and threw in a penny. The husband decided to make a wish, too but he leaned over too much, fell into the well, and drowned. The wife was stunned for a moment but then smiled, "It really works!"

A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically, "Relatives of yours?" "Yep," the wife replied, "in-laws."

3 Worst things you can say on a first date:

- I used to have a real bad bedwetting problem ... but in the last couple of weeks I've gotten it under control.
- I know we just met and this might seem a little sudden ... but could I borrow five hundred dollars?
- I had a good time tonight. I'd love to see you again in six to eight months with good behavior.

Here's a more serious Valentine image you might be able to relate to...

For God so lo**V**ed the world
th**A**t he gave his
on**L**y
begott**E**n
So**N**,
tha**T** whoever
bel**I**eves
i**N** him should not perish
but hav**E** everlasting life.

(John 3:16, NKJV)

We say we love each other, and we have ways of showing it now and again, but we all fall short of perfect love. God never falls short. He loves us perfectly and completely. He demonstrated this love toward us in that while we were still sinners, he died for us. He didn't and doesn't wait for us to get our act together. It is Finished!

The worship band has been going through a book together called, **Pure Praise**, by Wayne Moore. The book is excellent, and I recommend it to everyone to get a grounding and perspective of The God We Worship, which is our preaching series this Lenten season, and our part in all of this. Kelley has been leading the worship band through a discussion for each week at our rehearsal time. There are nine lessons, each with five readings for the week. Every reading has been enlightening and informative. PJ suggested doing our Lenten series around one of the week's lessons from this book.

Today's sermon is: The God We Worship – Transcendent God...

"Too many Christians today have become dangerously nonchalant in their approach to God. The Modern trend is to view God more as our buddy than as our transcendent, holy, and majestic God. Nowhere in the Scripture is God addressed as "dear God." He's called Holy Father, but never "dear God." (Pure Praise p. 41)

Today we will look at: **Transcendent God.**

I may have to define some of the terms we use today since they are theological terms.

TRANSCENDENT: A theological term referring to the relation of God to creation. God is “other,” “different” from His creation. He is independent and different from His creatures. He transcends His creation. He is beyond it and not limited by it or to it.

TEXT: Isaiah 55:8-9 - *“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. ⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*

God is not on our level. He is so far removed from our thinking that we cannot really get an understanding or glimpse of who He really is and how He works. This is paramount. We need to learn to recognize that God is Holy, and far beyond our comprehension. Yet – He loves us and wants an intimate relationship with each one of us. How can this be? How can we understand this miracle of God? Let’s look at this a bit.

You have an insert in your bulletin for you to take notes, and on the back side, some points from today’s sermon for your reflection during the next week. We hope you take advantage of these helps.

Heb. 12:28-29 - Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. For our God is a devouring fire.

How does this verse affect the way we view God? Is He our buddy? Or Is He the holy and reverent, powerful, God we revere and whom we fear? The word “fear” is not the same as to “be afraid of,” but to recognize His holiness and to be in awe of.

Ps. 102:19 - Tell them the LORD looked down from his heavenly sanctuary. He looked down to earth from heaven

God is “somewhere out there,” as the song says. He is looking down from heaven. We can’t fathom this concept. Yet, He is with us, at the same time. How can this be? We can’t understand this either.

“Jerry Bridges writes, ‘It is impossible to be devoted to God if one’s heart is not filled with the fear of God. It is this profound sense of veneration and honor, reverence and awe that draws forth from our hearts the worship and adoration that characterizes true devotion to God. The reverent, Godly Christian sees God first in his transcendent glory, majesty, and holiness before he sees him in his love, mercy and grace.’”

So, let us look at three of what are called “God’s ‘transcendent’ perfections or characteristics, because only God can possess them.” ...

God’s Sovereignty – God is ultimately in charge – Let’s reflect back on our story that we will be referring to throughout this Lenten series from 2 Chron. 20... Look at verses 5 & 6 ... **“Jehoshaphat stood before the community of Judah and Jerusalem in front of the new courtyard at the Temple of the LORD. He prayed, ‘O LORD, God of our ancestors, you alone are the God who is in heaven. You are ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!’”**

History plays a big part in how we view God. The people of Judah had peace of mind in remembering that God was able to overcome the armies that came against them in the past. He surely can overcome these armies too. After all, He is sovereign and in control of all things, even the outcome of this attack. Maybe Jehoshaphat reflected on his father's experience... **2 Chron. 14:11-12 – “Lord, there is no one like You to help the powerless against the mighty... we rely on You.”** God is in control – even if we don't think so, or maybe, if we don't want Him to be ...

Ps. 33:6-11 - The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born. He assigned the sea its boundaries and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs. Let the whole world fear the LORD, and let everyone stand in awe of him. For when he spoke, the world began! It appeared at his command. The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations and thwarts all their schemes. But the LORD's plans stand firm forever; his intentions can never be shaken.

God is the creator of everything. Why do we think sometimes we can control Him? He is in control of everything, all the time.

“Try as we may, no human can come up against almighty God and win. Pushing against God's plan is like trying to push waves back into the ocean.” (Pure Praise, p. 42)

A.W. Tozer illustration of the ocean liner and passengers as God's sovereignty and our free will...

God's Omnipotence – “God can do whatever He wants because he has all the power he needs, an unlimited supply.” (Pure Praise, p. 42)

Ps. 33:16-17 - The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior. Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory— for all its strength, it cannot save you.

Nothing in our own power can compare to God. Why do we think we can do things in our own strength? Another word for God's infinite strength is omnipotence. Jehoshaphat referred to this attribute of our transcendent God in his prayer in 2 Chronicles 20. We read this verse earlier...

2 Chron. 20:6b - You are powerful and mighty; no one can stand against you!

“Omnipotence has been described as ‘the will of God being put into operation.’” (Pure Praise, p. 42)

Jer. 32:17 - O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!

“As powerful as God is, how much power he makes available to us is somehow based on how much we realize we need it. It's as though God was just waiting for the children of Judah to give up all human attempts to solve their problem.” The author's favorite statement from the entire story of 2 Chron. 20, and I agree, is when Jehoshaphat realizes his uncertainty and helplessness when he said to God:
2 Chron. 20:12 - “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

Knowing down deep that God is sovereign and all-powerful should be reassuring to us. No matter what happens in our life, God is in control and we must trust him completely. Many times we have to get to the place where we give up trying to control circumstances in our own strength. That's when God's power become a reality to us.

God is immutable – He never changes. This is the third attribute of our transcendent God.

Mal. 3:6a - I am the LORD, and I do not change.

It was implied in our story from 2 Chron. 20 when Jehoshaphat called God the ***“God of our fathers.”*** He was actually saying, ***“God, you’re the same God our forefathers worshipped.”*** “The people of Judah had every reason to believe God would keep a promise he had made to Abraham over 1,000 years earlier.” (Pure Praise, p. 43)

We have the Bible to reveal to us how God is faithful and never changes. We read stories of God acting on behalf of His people throughout history so we can expect Him to act on our behalf as well. We see God as transcendent – high and lifted up – His throne is in Heaven – way out there somewhere. This should move us to highly respect and revere our Almighty God. Yet, He also has become near to us. He came in the person of Jesus – the transcendent God became near – then Jesus ascended to Heaven and became transcendent again. He’s not our buddy, pal, friend as we have sometimes considered Him, yet he wants to be close and intimate. It’s a balance we must purposely keep in place.

Heb. 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. – Jesus never changes – He is immutable God.

We just talked about this in our Bible Study at the Lab a few weeks ago. I grew up in a strict Catholic home. God was always out there somewhere – above all – transcendent. So were priests, brothers, and especially sisters (nuns) ☺ I revered them all and feared them – real fear not just reverence and respect. Then as a young adult I got saved by accepting Jesus, and I entered into a relationship with God I never thought possible. I started off the first few years of my new life in Pentecostal churches where this mentality of familiarity with God seemed the norm. In some ways I lost some of the reverence and respect in the process. It was a bit assuming, almost demanding God to do what is asked of Him in prayer, because we had a special insider relationship. However, reality started to make its way into my life in various forms that was confusing at first. After a few years the balance started to get me grounded in my faith. God is intimate and transcendent at the same time. I need to keep that perspective always. He is sovereign, omnipotent, and immutable – transcendent God.

The Bible teaches, ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”*** ***Prov. 9:10 – KJV***

Our daughter-in-law, Krystn, is a very artistic person. She is also the Mercurio’s daughter (yeah, we’re almost related). Anyway, she makes beautiful signs painted on various wood pieces – like this one. Beautiful, isn’t it? Yes they are for sale – custom made with your favorite scripture verse – commercial over.

We had dinner at Rob and Krystn’s last Sunday along with Corinne’s parents. Of course they were admiring the new signs and other items in the house, but their attention was drawn most, not to these beautiful pieces of artwork, but to a small framed black board in the dining room that had this scripture without reference written in chalk: ***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”*** They read it a couple of times and it seemed to be intriguing to them both for some reason. Then my mother-in-law asked me, “Nick, explain this to us, we don’t get it.” They were hung up on the word ***“fear.”***

They are not church-going people, but as they are getting older, they are softening up toward spiritual things, and I have opportunities to pray and speak with Mom about these things. I was able to explain this kind of fear is reverence and awe, not being afraid in terms we understand it. If we really revere God we can then begin to understand things the way God wants us to – it is truly the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. How about you? How do you see God? How do you relate to Him being all powerful, unchangeable, and sovereign, God? We stand in awe – so amazed – totally changed by your presence forever... Let’s sing that together.