

Living in Awe of God's Character

1/20/2019

A.W. Tozer said: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

And so, I want to begin this morning's sermon with a simply fill in the blank question:

"God is _____?" How would you answer that question?

Last week my mind was filled to overflowing with facts and figures about God's amazing creation. This week my heart is filled with wonder at the character of God. I've been studying and meditating on various aspects that describe who God is at His core in the Bible.

There's no way we can fully explore all of the characteristics of God this morning, so I've chosen a handful of characteristics of God for us to meditate on this morning and hopefully beyond today.

Now, one way to do this would be to look at the standard three "omni's" of God that are often used to describe Him.

- **God is omnipresent:** He is always everywhere. David talked about this aspect of God in **Psalm 139** and marveled and lived in wonder that He can't ever get away from God's presence.
- **God is omniscient:** God is all knowing. Nothing ever catches God by surprise.
- **God is omnipotent:** God is all powerful, there is nothing that God can not do. The apostle Paul was blown away by this in comparison to our capabilities when he said: "*God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,*" **Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)**

And those are certainly amazing characteristics of God. But this morning I want to go deeper into some of the character traits of God that ought to create a profound sense of awe and wonder and a deeper reverence for who God is.

1. God is holy

When God miraculously rescued the Israelites from the mighty Egyptian army, Moses and all the Israelites sang a song to God and part of the lyrics of that song were:

"*Who among the gods is like you, Lord? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?*" (Exodus 15:11 (NIV))

When the prophet Isaiah was given a glimpse into the activities in heaven he saw God seated on His throne and the seraphs encircling His throne were proclaiming: "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.*" (Isaiah 6:3)

Similarly, when the apostle John was given a glimpse into heaven he also saw God's throne and the 4 living creatures around his throne were also proclaiming: "*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*" (Revelation 4:8)

Holy means to be set apart, to be distinct from everything else around and God is certainly that. It's not really a separate quality, like the others we're about to discover, holiness means that God is wholly different than anyone or anything else in all of creation. Everything else has been created – but God is the Creator. And so the other aspects of God's character, while we may have similar aspects in us, God's level of these is totally different from everyone else's. God's aspects of each of these is in a whole other category. And yet, amazingly enough we are called to strive to be like God in many of these aspects as well. The apostle Peter calls us to be holy, just like God is holy (1 Peter 1:15). Our love and kindness and mercy shouldn't merely be like others in this world, who may not even know God. Our level of love

should be on a whole different level, just like God's is. But since we're talking about a supernatural level of these various qualities, we're incapable of developing these by our own effort. It can only be developed through the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. So, pray earnestly that God would develop these various aspects of His character inside of us.

2. God is righteous

God established a system of right and wrong, as defined in the Old Testament and God always lives by that standard. In fact, the Law given in the Old Testament is largely a reflection of God's character. But God never varies from His own standard of right and wrong. He never tells a little white lie, He never fudges on the truth. He never lies or deceives or promises something and fails to fulfill it.

Psalms 145:17 (NIV) *The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.*

God is reliable and can be counted on to fulfill all of His promises.

Psalms 7:11 (NIV) *God is a righteous judge, a God who displays his wrath every day.*

This is good news because it means that God is always going to be right in all of His judgments. As the ultimate judge, God can't be bribed. He's not going to give one person a guilty sentence for their sins and someone else gets a lighter sentence because He likes them more. God is always fair and righteous in His judgments.

But we have a problem: because none of us is righteous. Nobody ever has been and nobody ever will be.

Romans 3:10 (NIV) *"There is no one righteous, not even one;*

Romans 3:23 (NIV) *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

God hates sin.

3. God is love

Psalms 100:5 (NIV) *For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV) *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.*

Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV) *Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

We all deserve God's judgment because of our sins. We're all guilty before God. But thank you God for your undeserving love for us sinners. God didn't have to do this. We deserve His judgment. We deserve to be wiped off the face of this earth, like God did many times to evil nations throughout the Old Testament. But chose to love us and to offer us His grace and mercy.

4. God is merciful

Daniel 9:9 (NIV) *The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;*

Mercy means that we don't get what we deserve. We deserve God's wrath and judgment, but God loves us and wants a relationship with everyone of us. So, He doesn't give us his wrath and instead He poured out His wrath upon his son, Jesus Christ when he died on the cross.

Because God's a righteous judge He couldn't just wipe away our sins by saying it's okay. He established in the Garden of Eden and then further expressed through the Law, that there's a penalty for our sin. And to merely just let us off without any sort of payment would make God unrighteous and unjust. So, instead, Jesus came and all of God's judgment on our sins was placed upon Jesus.

As a result of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross we can choose to accept Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and receive God's mercy and grace, which then makes it possible for us to come into a right relationship with God. And so we receive an open invitation to come into God's presence without fear of God's judgment.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV) *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

5. God is gracious (full of grace)

While mercy is not receiving what we rightfully deserve – God's judgment and wrath.

Grace is receiving what we don't deserve – God's gift of salvation (a restored relationship with Him).

Psalms 116:5 (NIV) *The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.*

You can't earn your way into a relationship with God. It's only through God's gift of grace that allows you or me to have a restored relationship with God. It's all about God's work for you and in you.

6. God is patient

2 Peter 3:9-10 (NIV) *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.*

The reason the Lord hasn't come back yet is because He's patient and loving.. He doesn't want anyone to be separated from Him for all of eternity. And so, He continues to wait for at least one more people to return.

7. God is a generous and giving God (Malachi 3:10; Mt. 7:11; Eph. 1:3; Philippians 4:19; Heb. 11:6)

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Character of God:

1. **God is holy:** (Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8; 1 Peter 1:15)
"Holy" means to be set apart or distinct from all others.
2. **God is righteous:** (Psalm 145:17; 7:11; Romans 3:10, 23)
God always lives out His law.
As The Judge of men God rules rightly.
3. **God is love:** Psalm 100:5; Jeremiah 31:3; Lam. 3:22-23)
4. **God is merciful:** (Daniel 9:9; Hebrews 4:16)
Mercy means not getting what we deserve: i.e God's judgment
5. **God is gracious (full of grace):** Psalm 116:5; Ephesians 2:8-9)
Grace is receiving something we don't deserve
6. **God is patient:** (2 Peter 3:9-10)
7. **God is a generous giving God.** (Malachi 3:10; Mt. 7:11; Eph. 1:3; Philip. 4:19; Heb. 11:6)

What character of God (not necessarily on this list) has been the most important to you?

Why?

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