

Who is God?

Job 38: 1-18, Eph 1:1-4

Friends, what *do* you and I really know of Holy – what *do* we really know of God? Who is He, what is He really like, what does He do?

You know from time to time it is good for us to reflect on these questions, because maybe we don't know as much about God as we think we do.

Because for some of us, God is just a vague and indefinite concept which dwells at the edges of our life, we really don't talk or think about Him or have much to do with Him at all.

For others of us – especially those who have attended church for many years, God is a familiar figure in our lives. We know all about Him, or at least we think we do...

And that sort of presumption can lead to familiarity, which as the saying goes – *breeds contempt*. “Oh sure God... He's all powerful, all present, all knowing...oh look at that the NDP is surging in the polls, and they will have live coverage of the

royal wedding. Now that's something you don't see everyday isn't it?”

Friends, it happens. God can become such a regular part of our everyday lives that we just take him for granted. Our relationship with Him becomes routine, ordinary and common place and He just fades into the background scenery.

Do you know what I'm talking about? That's why it's good to ask “what do we know of God?” and take some time to remember and reflect upon the answers available to us, because doing so will help to regain that sense of awe and wonder and immediacy in our relationship with God that we've lost or perhaps we never had.

So what do we know about God...ask that question any you will get any number of answers...

God can be everywhere at once, God is all-powerful, He's all knowing,

He's pretty busy running the world; we shouldn't sweat him with the small stuff.

God is inside all of us, God is in the rocks and trees,

God is an old guy in the sky who rewards good and punishes evil, God is a concept that we've invented to help people behave,

God is male, God is female, God has no gender, God is an impersonal force, God is the universe, God is your Higher Power, and on and on it can go...

And all of these answers – some of which are contradictory, beg the question...how do we know what we know about God? Where do we get our information about Him?

Some will say we know primarily through what we have experienced in the occult, the psychic, or the spiritualist side of life.

Others will say we know primarily through figuring it out by using logic and reason – like Sherlock Holmes.

Still others will say its tradition, the myths and legends passed down in oral or written form from the ancient world – like the Hindu Upanishads, or Native religions.

Is one approach right, are the rest wrong? Well you and I know that most people today prefer to deflect this question by saying that all roads lead to God, that it's really about whatever works for you.

And friends, this response reveals the one characteristic which all these approaches to knowing God have in common in spite of their many differences. And that is they are human attempts to reach out and discover God.

They all begin with a human initiative, attempting to discover something which can lead them to know about God. And in the spirit of humility and tolerance and recognizing our human fallibility who of us can truly say that our approach is right and another's is wrong – fair enough!

But... **what if God took the initiative** and broke into human history in an effort to introduce Himself to us? What if He opened a door which allowed us to catch a glimpse of who He is and what He is like? Then we could say with confidence – with authority and conviction! That based on what He’s told us about himself - this is what we know to be *true* about God!

Of course you’re probably anticipating that I’m going to say that God has done this, and that the Bible tells the story of this self-revelation and how it has progressed. And you are right.

God has done this – He has broken into the human history. He initiated a relationship with a few individuals at first, and then He grew them into a nation and from that nation the savior of the world, Jesus Christ was born – and now billions of people across the ages have come to know who God really is.

Friends, this is what makes the Judeo-Christian faith unique – God initiated it! and the scriptures tell the story of how that happened... and is still happening.

But – it’s a rather long story isn’t it? It starts out at the beginning of the world, and winds its way through several thousand years of history until Jesus shows up and that was over two thousand years ago...

Wouldn’t it be helpful if we could have some sort of summary that would be able to accurately condense and capture what God has revealed about himself from the story of scripture so that when we must answer questions of “Who is God? What do you know about Him? What is He like?” we can do so accurately and succinctly – and therefore effectively.

Obviously it would be – and friends, the good news is that we have such a summary at our disposal, though we might have never thought of **the Apostle’s Creed** in this way before.

But in order to truly appreciate it as such and understand it, we need to go through and unpack what it summarizes.

And when we do, we notice right away is that the Creed is made up of three sections – the first deals with God, the second with Jesus Christ and the third is about the Holy Spirit.

And so to answer the question – “What do we know about God?” let’s look at the first section...**I believe in God...the Father... Almighty... Creator of Heaven and Earth.**

So to expand this, imagine it’s kind of like a drop-down menu on a website. You know, the ones where you put your mouse over it and a whole list of things appears below it?

So let’s look at the description “**Creator of Heaven and Earth**” first. What does this mean? Well quite simply that God created everything that exists – both the physical and spiritual aspects of reality. He created the world we live in, and he created the spiritual dimension we call heaven.

That’s what we see in the passage we read from Job this morning.

⁴ “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

⁵ Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who

stretched a measuring line across it? ⁶ On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—

- the Earth...

⁷ while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

-And the heavens...

And this is important because God wants us to know that He is a God who values both spiritual things, and earthly things. They are equally important to Him – because He is responsible for bringing both into existence.

Friends, sometimes we believe that being religious person means focusing on spiritual things and turning away from earthly things. I’ll give you an example, “*a spiritual person should be focused on love, and peace, and helping people and not on making money, or playing sports, or designing fashionable clothes, at best those are distasteful necessities and distractions*”

So if that's what it means to be spiritual I have to ask, do you sometimes struggle to feel like you are a proper Christian because you enjoy the goods things in life, like a fine wine and aged cheddar, beautiful clothes and jewelry, the latest smart phone or video game system, a motorcycle or a muscle car?

Or maybe you enjoy looking attractive or admiring the attractiveness of others, or going on romantic getaways for some intimate times with your spouse and just how wonderful that feels.

Friends what we know to be true about God is that He made the heavens *and the earth* – He is a God who values both and therefore so should we.

When you know the truth about God – it sets you free from feeling like you are an inadequate Christian and lets you enjoy – ***but not worship*** - the world that God made and all that is in it...does a chef not want you to savor the meal He cooked?

And in return you thank Him for it and complement Him on how amazing it all is! And if we are intentional about doing

this, God quickly comes off the sidelines of your everyday and is back as the center focus of all that we do.

That's important to know because while one danger is that God is sidelined in our daily life, the other danger is that we will worship the creation instead of the creator. And that is idolatry – and it's a very real temptation for us because of our sinful nature, and because some parts of God's creation are so amazing it's easy to think they are gods.

(Chuck Norris jokes for eg. ☺)

That's especially true with the spiritual side isn't it? When people encounter spiritual phenomenon in our world, they often worship it. What would you do if you saw an angel in all its heavenly glory? This is what happened to the apostle John when he received the vision recorded in the book of Revelation from an angel.

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant

with you and with your fellow prophets and with all who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God!”

So we don't worship angels or other spiritual phenomenon, we don't worship our selves, our work, our money or our family or our toys. Friends we worship God because, God is the Creator of both heavens and earth...and He is also Almighty.

That means there is no one greater than Him; there is no one who created Him, no one to whom He owes his allegiance or obedience, and no one who can determine what is right or wrong for God to do. He is Almighty.

Almighty is why He could simply speak the heavens and the earth into existence

Almighty is why we can't see God face to face and live.

Almighty is so beyond us... that we can't really begin to comprehend it as created beings! Almighty is why God comes to Job and says:

² *"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?"* ³ *Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.*

And God wants us to know He is Almighty because it's the essence of what makes God different from us – and friends, we need to understand that God is different from us.

Because these days we have an inflated view of ourselves as human beings, and while it's affirming to know we are made in His image- we are not made of His essence, so there isn't a little piece of God in each one of us, and God isn't just a psychological projection of our subconscious desires, we are differentiated from God.

God is God and we are not. He is Almighty we are not his equals or even close. And this means that while we are supposed to rule over and develop the earth as His stewards, we do not have the authority to override the distinctions and the norms that God has built into the structure of creation, and call them good.

For example, we can't change marriage from what God intended it to be, a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman, and we can't sanction same sex relationships as normative the way heterosexual relationships are.

But, the reality is that marriages fail, people struggle with same sex attraction, and there are many other manifestations of brokenness which occur in God the Almighty's good creation.

And if what we knew about God ended here then we'd be in trouble. While we may be awestruck and tremble in fear at the majesty and awesomeness of the Almighty, it does not fix what has gone wrong in this world.

That's why the Creed also refers to God as **Father**, and if we are going to know anything about God at all – we should know this. It's the most important thing that God wants us to know about Himself.

And it doesn't mean that God is male or that males are God, and I know that some people have a hard time with it because they have suffered abuse from their fathers, but...what God wants us to know beyond anything else – is that **He is the Father of Jesus Christ**.

This is what the Apostle Paul is emphasizing as he writes his letter to the Ephesians – In two sentence he refers to God and

Jesus together four times, and the fourth time he articulates the relationship *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”*

Remember the Creed summarizes the story of scripture and while God starts out as the Almighty Creator, the story progresses and we come to know that God is someone who so desires to fix what has gone wrong in His world that He sends His only son as the savior.

The incarnation of the Word of God becoming flesh and living among us is the signature characteristic of who God really is and what we can know about Him. It's such an important part of who He is that any other view of God which excludes this information is essentially incomplete and therefore ultimately incorrect.

I'm sure you can understand – if you had something which you had done which was your greatest accomplishment ever, which really defined you, you wouldn't feel like people really knew who you were unless that it was included in how you were spoken about.

It's not just Sid Crosby, the kid in the Tim Bit Hockey commercial – It's Sid, the Captain of Team Canada who scored the OT goal against our arch-rivals to win Olympic Gold! Right? It's the same with God becoming the Father of Jesus Christ.

But friends, whether or not people are willing to speak of God as the Father boils down to the first part of this statement...“I believe!”

Many people believe in God, yes – but they don't believe He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But that is who God wants to be known as, and friends it is also how God wants to be known.

Friends, the good news is that if we truly want to know God, there is a way opened for us. We do not have to rely on our fallible abilities to analyze our spiritual experiences, use try and use logic and reason, or attempt to make some sense out an ancient myths. We can know God through Jesus. Believe it...friends, Jesus himself says:

If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” (John 14:7)

So friends, what do we know about God? What do we know of Holy? Well, let me summarize it for you, and let's confess it together.

We believe...in God...the Father, almighty, creator of heaven, and earth!

Friends, If you truly believe this, if it is your confession...then your calling is to take it with you everywhere you go this week.

Live like you know God – because He has revealed Himself to you. Show the world what you know of Holy!

Amen.