

## Who is God?

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

Brothers and sisters in Christ, from time to time it is good for us to reflect on the question “God is \_\_\_\_\_?” Because maybe we don’t know as much about God as we think we do.

As we saw in the video 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 we would have found many of the responses in the video cringe-worthy.

But let us be reminded that while we might have given better descriptions of God we know so well from scripture – we would do well to remember that such *familiarity breeds contempt* or at the very least make God rather mundane.

“God is... oh well that’s easy God is all powerful, all present, all knowing... and oh wow! Look at that – isn’t that the DeLorean car from Back to the Future!! Incredible!! Now that’s something you don’t see every day is it! Sorry what were you asking me again?”

You see brothers and sisters 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...as we saw in the video there are a 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.

Now brothers and sisters – this kind of broad 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 experience or initiative, attempting to discover something which can lead them to know about God.

And in our post-modern spirit of humility and tolerance, 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...

So 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.

This would be a great help wouldn't it! And brothers and sisters the good news is that we do 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 of the Creed. “I believe in God...the Father... Almighty... Creator of Heaven and Earth.

And if you can imagine it – consider this statement to be 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 in a box below it? So we're going to work our way back from the list of drop down descriptors about God in the Creed.

Let's start with the last one, the description “Creator of Heaven and Earth”. 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.

*<sup>4</sup> “Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. <sup>5</sup> Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? <sup>6</sup> On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—*

This is a majestic description by God himself of his activity in creating the Earth... and the passage continues.

*<sup>7</sup> while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*

This is God implying that He is also the creator of the heavens, not just outerspace and galaxies, but the spiritual realm where angels dwell and God has his heavenly throne.

And this is important friends because God wants us to know that He created ALL things – physical and spiritual.

And - 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.

And here is where what we know about God has practical implications for our day to day lives friends.

Many people believe that being religious person who believe in God means focusing only on spiritual things and turning away from earthly things.

You may have heard someone say something like *“a spiritual person should be focused on love, and peace, and helping other people and not on making money, or playing sports, or*

*designing fashionable clothes, at best those are distasteful necessities and distractions”*

So if this is what God was really about, if this is something that you kind of believe – then you probably struggle to feel like you are a proper Christian because you enjoy the good physical 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.

But friends, the Apostle’s Creed summarizes what we know to be true about God from scriptures and it states that He made the heavens *and the earth* – So He is a God who values both and therefore so should we.

When you know the truth about who God is 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 every day and at worship weekly, then God very quickly comes off the sidelines of your everyday and becomes the center focus of all that we do.

Now this is important to believe and practice because it helps to keep us from neglecting God as common place AND is also keeps us from focusing on creation too much and worshipping it instead of the Creator - that is idolatry.

And it's a very real temptation for us because of our sinful nature, and because many parts of God's creation are SO amazing it's easy to think they are gods, or that we should center our life and identities upon them.

And ironically it's not just the physical aspect of life that we idolize. This is especially true with the spiritual side as well.

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.

*<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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 the Creed also states, He is Almighty.

Almighty 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, or an explanation. There is no one who can determine what it is right or wrong for God to do.

He is Almighty. This 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: <sup>2</sup> *"Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?"* <sup>3</sup> *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- it's important to understand that we are not made of God's essence.

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 categorically 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 mustn't change marriage from what God intended it to be, a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman, we should not erase or blur the lines between male and female as God created them, we should not think that we can work seven days a week and ignore the

Sabbath rest without consequence - and Adam and Eve were not to take the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil...

But they did- and so the reality is that we do override God's norms and act like we are gods defining what is good and evil and so marriages fail, people struggle with same sex attraction, we run businesses seven days a week - and there are many other manifestations of brokenness which occur in God's good creation as a result of ignoring His Almightyness.

Now if God was only Creator of Heaven and Earth and Almighty and it ended there then we'd be in trouble.

Because the way humanity lives, and how we treat the creation, and ignore the Creator... quite frankly its offensive to God and it provokes Him to do something about it.

But instead of God acting as Judge and Jury and unleashing the destructive consequences that we deserve for sinning

against Him – the apostle's Creed has one more description of God that is extremely important to know and believe in.

The Creed finally – and firstly - refers to God as Father, and if we are going to know anything about God at all – we should know this. This is the most important thing from scripture 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 this is a bit of a trigger for some people because they have suffered abuse from their fathers and how we get past that is a sermon for another day.

But, it can help if we understand that what God wants us to know about Himself 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 we have done to His world, So 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 God 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 people spoke about you.

So for example Sid Crosby isn’t just a famous NHL player who was the kid in the Tim Bit Hockey commercial – Sidney Crosby has won not 1 but 2 Stanley Cups with the Penguins, and lead Team Canada to Olympic gold twice – but perhaps most importantly he is the one who scored the OT game winning goal against the Americans, our national arch-rivals, for gold!

It’s the same with God becoming the Father of Jesus Christ.

But brothers and sisters, whether or not we or others 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, they may even believe in God Creator of heaven and earth, the Almighty... But they don’t believe He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But – the Apostle’s creed summarizing the scriptures tells us 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 of 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? How should we fill in the blank to the question “God is \_\_\_\_\_”

Well let’s confess it together. *We believe...in God...the Father, almighty, creator of heaven, and earth! Amen*