

God Is All Present

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 August 2024

Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

[0 : 0 0] Thank you. I absolutely love that song. If you have a Bible with you, please turn to Psalm 139.

If not, there should be some around the pews. If you don't have a Bible at all and you find one of the black ones in the pews, then please take it. Take it with you. Today we're concluding our summer series on the attributes of God by no way covering all the attributes or all that we could say.

But this morning we're finishing up by considering God's omnipresence, that God is all-present. He is present everywhere, always.

And I'm going to read from verse 7 in Psalm 139. To verse 12. King David says this, Where shall I go from your spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

[1 : 2 2] If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, the light about me be night. Even the darkness is not dark to you.

Night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. God, we thank you for your word and the truth of your word.

Your word is not just some ancient text, but is a living word. We pray that as we open it and read it and consider, you would speak to us, make us aware that you are fully present here and now.

Amen. Well, have you ever been, and as I ask this question, try to refrain from looking at someone. Have you ever been with someone and it's like the lights are on, but nobody's home?

[2 : 3 3] I'm sure we've all been like that ourselves at times. Present, but not really present. As we consider that God is, by his very nature, present everywhere and always, I think it's perhaps a good thing for us to remember or to realize that being present is not simply about your physical body being in a certain location.

Presence isn't just a matter of matter. If we only understand presence in terms of material attendance, then we won't understand what it is to be truly present with someone.

Nor will we understand that God is present. You see, physicality doesn't guarantee presence. You maybe know that as a child, seeing a pair of legs on the sofa and the rest of the body covered by a great newspaper.

Nowadays, it's a phone. Physicality doesn't guarantee presence. And at the same time, the lack of physicality doesn't mean absence.

And so, there are two aspects to explain this. Firstly, physicality doesn't guarantee presence because we know that a person can be in physical attendance, yet also mentally, emotionally, relationally, be absent.

[4 : 03] Sometimes, it's simply that your body is in one place and your mind is somewhere else. Other times, a person might be in a room, but they're not engaged. Two people being physically present, but a relationship is absent.

Other times, as I said, your mind just might be somewhere else, and I'm not saying that that's wrong. But it's challenging in this point simply to help us see that presence is more than just being in physical attendance.

presence. How can we truly be present with one another? Presence itself isn't just about physicality. And secondly, the lack of physicality doesn't mean absence because presence isn't merely a matter of matter.

That is to say, physical matter isn't a necessary component of presence. And how can I say that? Because God is spirit. God is without body or physicality, and yet God is more present than we will ever be.

If we think that presence is solely tied to physical matter, we will struggle to know or accept that God really is present. God is present right now, right here, fully present in the most engaged and involved way that he possibly ever could be.

[5 : 29] Now, we need to speak accurately of God as we consider God's presence. Hopefully we can see that even our own experience shows that presence isn't necessarily about physicality.

God can be present without the need of a body, and God can be present whether we feel it or not. There's a difference between God's manifest presence and God's omnipresence.

presence, and that is to say that God is always fully present everywhere, but sometimes he makes that more obvious to our senses than other times. Now, when God becomes manifestly present, that doesn't mean he is more present, it just means that it's more obvious that he is present.

We've seen how presence isn't limited by or defined by physicality, nor is presence limited by how much it is felt, but the difference between us and God is that his presence is not limited by space or time.

Because we are physical beings, our presence can only be in one place at one time. But God, by nature, is spirit and simple. He is eternal and infinite.

[6 : 42] His presence is not limited by space or time. He can be in all places at all times. Or, more accurately, it's not really about a place or a time.

It's not really about a place or a time because God cannot be thought in terms of location or time. Because location and time are finite and measurable, whereas God is not.

You can no more measure God's eternity than you can measure his immensity. You can't measure him. And while we cannot fully comprehend God, we can speak truly of God.

And to speak truly of God, we must refrain from using terms about God that do not belong to God. It's like saying God is not big.

We cannot say that God is big because that's a measurement. God's not big. Likewise, we need to be careful if we say things like, God is here or God is present.

[7 : 43] It may be true, but it's always true. It is always true whether we feel it or not. And so, if we were to perhaps say one Sunday, God became manifestly present in a way that was obvious and felt.

And if we were to say, God is present, we may unintentionally say that every other Sunday is less present. We don't want to say that.

Now, I don't think anyone believes that, but we need to be speaking accurately. For instance, as well, in Matthew 18, where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am.

It's a true and wonderful statement, but it's not about his omnipresence because it's not like you need to have at least two or three for God to be present.

He's always present everywhere, always. The unintended consequence would be to say that unless you have two or three, he's not present. And I don't think we're really saying that.

[8 : 44] We're not saying that. But we need to speak accurately about God. We must be careful about how we speak because there is not a time or a place in which he is not fully present, whether we feel it or not.

And we need to know that even when we don't feel it, God is not only with us, he is fully attentive and fully available everywhere and always. to the greatest extent that we could possibly imagine, he is present, presently engaged, available, attentive, listening, available, relational.

God is present. And what a tremendous confidence we then have in prayer, for instance. You see, it doesn't matter if there are two or three or ten or a hundred or even if you were living in some remote corner of Greenland.

Greenland is the least densely populated country in the world. God is present everywhere. King David says, if I ascend to heaven, you are there. You may or may not know that there are currently two astronauts who are stranded on the International Space Center.

Stranded. They were on an eight-day mission to space and that eight-day mission, because their spacecraft malfunctioned, has turned into an eight-month rescue mission. as lonely and dangerous as that environment is, away from the comforts of earth.

[10 : 11] Is God not present there? God is just as present there as he is here. King David then says, if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me.

You probably know about the people who perished on that little submarine that was going down to explore Titanic. Such a harsh environment down there in the depths of the sea, but God is not absent.

He's there as well. David says, where shall I go from your spirit? Where shall I flee from your presence? There is nowhere. And one thing to notice about this wonderful truth that David is exploring is that as David says these things, he's not just simply saying, God is present everywhere in the universe.

verse, he always says, where I go, if I were to go, if I were to go here, if I were to go there, the great encouragement of Psalm 139 is that God is everywhere you are.

Everywhere you are. He is with you wherever you may find yourself. God's omnipresence isn't just about him being in attendance, but also being fully attentive to you, fully available to you no matter what situation you find yourself in.

[11 : 33] He is in any place, in any situation, calling you always to himself. So, let's consider this as our evidence of that.

You see, he was with Adam in the garden, and he was with Seth when they left. He was with Noah on the ark, and with Abraham and Canaan. He was with Isaac at the well, and with Jacob while he slept.

He was with Joseph in a pit, with Aaron in Egypt, and with Moses and Midian. He was with Joshua in the Jordan, with Rahab in the city wall, and with Ruth in the field.

He was with David in every danger, with Elijah in the cave. He was with Jonah in a fish, with Shadrach in a furnace, with Daniel in a lion's den.

He was with Jeremiah in a cistern, with Ezekiel in Babylon. He was with John in the desert, with Matthew in a tax booth. He was with Nathanael under the fig tree.

[12 : 35] He was with Peter in a storm. He was with Silas in a prison, and he was with Paul in a shipwreck. There is no situation, no circumstance, no place that God will not be with you always.

And for those who trust God, he is the grace in our shame. He is the life in our death. He is the lifeboat in judgment.

He is the living God among idols. He is the light in our darkness and the lamp to our feet. He is the shepherd in the shadow of death. He is the fortress in our battle.

He is the calm in our storm. He is the strength in our weakness. He is the voice in our wilderness. He is the joy in our pain. And he is the freedom in our chains.

God is always with you. But his presence to those who hate him is no comfort at all. You see, his light is a terror to those who love darkness.

[13 : 37] His love means that he abhors all that is evil. He is both just and merciful, but he isn't going to veto your freedom and responsibility.

You see, to one he is a purifying fire, but to the other he is a consuming fire. Those who trust him are like gold being purified, but those who reject him are like wood, stubble, and hay who are burned up.

To those who trust him, he is the potter who shapes us. And when the potter shapes us, when we trust the potter are to shape us, we will get stronger in the kiln.

But if we want to shape our own selves and our own lives, we will only crack and break in the kiln. You see, it's not about God being angry like a child with no one to play with.

It's about him being our creator and knowing what we are meant to be. He knows what we are meant to be because he designed us. And when we decide our own shape and design, then our vessel is no longer fit for purpose.

[14 : 52] We harm ourselves and others. And so, although the potter is present to both, the experience is different. Now, one of the astounding things that I find, I don't know if you've found this in the Bible, one of the astounding things that I find is the sheer patience and grace of God with those who continually reject him, that he allows such a long time for people to turn back to him.

How patient is he, for instance, with Cain, who killed his brother? How patient is he with Cain? Yet Cain continually rejected God. And it says in Genesis 4 that he left the presence of the Lord.

Not that he could ever actually do that, but he turned away from God. That's what it means. Pharaoh, Pharaoh rejected God, and God was present.

And yet, because Pharaoh rejected him, Pharaoh was crushed by the power of his presence. King Saul rejected God and was tormented.

King Ahab thought that he could outsmart God and ended up with an arrow between his armor and his chest. And King Herod in Acts 12 thought that he could take some glory from God, and he ended up being eaten by worms.

[16 : 15] You see, trying to live by our own design will do us no good in the end. C.S. Lewis said in Mere Christianity, all our life long, our choices are slowly turning this central part of us into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature.

And he's not merely saying that bad choices lead to a bad life. He's saying that the way that we live shows where we are preparing to live forever. So in respect to God's presence, we know even from human experience that to a person who likes mischief, the presence of a good person is not tolerable.

It's like Homer Simpson living next door to Flanders, Ned Flanders. We know this from human experience, that a person who likes mischief being next to a good person is intolerable.

How much more for a wicked person to be in the presence of a holy God? You see, Revelation 6 says that they call to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand without being given the righteousness of the Lamb of God, without having a record that stood against us cancelled on the cross, without being transformed by his grace and spirit.

[17 : 38] No one can stand in his presence, much less be fit for eternity. So, Psalm 2 says, Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.

Blessed are those who take refuge in him. That's the great truth. There is no refuge from him, there is only refuge in him. And if you trust in him and find refuge in him, then even now, and every moment, whether you're with 120 like in the upper room in Pentecost, or with one other like Paul and Silas in prison, or whether you are on your own and feel abandoned, like Paul in 2 Timothy 4 when Paul said, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me, all deserted me, but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.

Matthew says in Matthew 28, when Jesus gave this wonderful promise, I will be with you always, to the end of the age.

Hebrews 13, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Who shall we fear? Now, there's always more that we can explore in one sitting. One question that I want to leave you with, and if you want to explore it as a question that I'm exploring and some things that I'm writing, is, if God is with you, fully present everywhere, always, then what on earth is church for?

If you want to explore that question, then come and speak to me. We will arrange a time to do that as part of something I'm currently working on and exploring what it means to be part of the family.

[19 : 25] But suffice it to say this, to finish, even here, even right now, right here, in ways that we cannot possibly fathom, God is more present.

God is more attentive, more available than we could possibly know. He's fully present right now. So whether you know him or not, if you have any business to do with God, do it now.

We're going to sing a song, and during that song I would encourage you to do business with God, for he is right here. Take an opportunity, knowing that he is right here with us, fully engaged, searching your heart.

Let us do business, especially before we come to the table together. Let me pray. God, you are right here, right now. We don't necessarily feel it or see it, but surely it is true of an omnipresent God.

You're a good God, and you are fully available, fully present, fully attentive. So God, please speak to us, speak to our hearts, move us in a way that lets us know that you are here.

[20 : 44] Let us do business with you now, and we thank you that we can through Jesus. Amen.