

What Is God Like?: Omnipresent & Omniscient

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday, October 4th, 2020. My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Bramard Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Good morning and welcome to everyone who's joining us this morning. Welcome as well to people who will be watching or listening in the future. We're live streaming right now but this will be available for viewing and listening later on in the week and months ahead. So welcome regardless of how you're tuning in. Well I'll be leading us in communion this morning so that'll be later in our service. So gather whatever you have handy, a glass of water or a glass of juice and a cracker or a small piece of bread. So please have that handy and we'll use that. You'll know when the time comes for us to use that. As well don't be afraid to, if you're watching live on Facebook, don't be afraid to comment. You know it's very helpful to be able to hear from you and we're glad to hear from you and you know if you want to just say good morning or anything so that we know you're there, that's great. Lots of people prefer to be incognito and that's fine too but it certainly is nice to hear from folks as we're doing this. So now we're going to join together in worshipping some songs and we're going to sing three songs. For the beauty of the earth, Jesus paid it all, and immortal invisible. So we're going to sing those three songs and as always the worship leader, you'll hear him singing and playing and you'll also see the lyrics on the screen. So God bless you as you sing and we begin with For the Beauty of the Earth this morning.

For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth, over and around us lies. Christ our God, to thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of the sky, for the beauty of each hour, of the day and of the night. Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars alike.

Christ our God, to thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

For that great, great love of mine. Peace on earth and joy in heaven.

[3 : 40] Christ our God, to Thee we raise This our sacrifice of praise I hear the Savior say Thy strength indeed is small Child of weakness, watch and pray Find in me Thine all in all Jesus, fade it all All to Him I owe

Sin I left a crimson stain He washed it white and snow Oh, now indeed I find Thy power and Thine alone Can change the leopard spots And melt the heart of stone Cause Jesus made it all All to Him I owe Sin I left a crimson stain He washed it white and snow And when before the throne I stand in Him complete

Jesus died my soul to save My lips shall still repeat That Jesus made it all All to Him I owe Sin I left a crimson stain He washed it white and snow He washed it white and snow Immortal, invisible, God only lives God only lives

Enlightened, accessible, hid from our eyes Most blessed, most glorious Most blessed, most glorious Most glorious, the ancient of days All mighty victorious Thy great name we praise Unresting, unhasting And silent as a light Nor wanting, nor wasting Thou who lives tonight Thy justice like mountains High soaring above Thy clouds which are fount Of goodness and love Great Father of glory Great Father of glory Your Father of life Thy angels adore Thee All veiling this light Of all Thy rich graces Is grace, Lord, impart Take the veil from our faces The veil from all Heart Take the veil from the faces The veil from all Heart All Lord Lord Render O help us to see To turn the splendor A light hideth he, and so let thy glory almighty impart Through Christ and his story, thy cries to the heart I hope you enjoyed that time singing together. Let's open our service in prayer now.

[9 : 04] Father God, thank you for the opportunity to come before you this morning in this way.

Lord, thank you as well for the opportunity to sing our praises, recognizing who you are, what you've done, the fact that you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and our Lord, and that we

can have eternal life through a relationship with him and with you.

Lord, as we continue in our series this morning, I pray that you would bless each one, that the words that you have for each one of us this morning will land, will resonate, will be meaningful, and will penetrate hearts and minds.

Lord, open our ears, open our minds to what you have for us this morning, and I pray that you would bless the words of my mouth as your humble servant. We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well, we're continuing in our series called, What is God Like? And there's extra points for anybody who can figure out how far along we are out of ten. Any guesses?

We're at eight. This morning will be eight qualities of God that we will have looked at in our series. And over the course of the series, as I've said before, we're exploring ten different qualities and characteristics of God that we recognize in him, that are unique to him in Scripture.

[10:24] And we're going to continue to look at a human understanding of those qualities, as well as what they mean in relation to us and to the overall character of God.

What they mean for us personally in our faith and in our lives. And last week we looked at what it means to recognize that God is eternal and immutable.

Do you remember that? Our God is eternal. He's not bound by time. He's not in a rush. And while our time will eventually run out and we recognize that, God's plan continues forward into eternity. Our days are definitely numbered, but they're numbered by an eternal loving God who holds our future in his hands and who has a plan for our lives.

We also recognized last week that God is immutable, unchanging, unchangeable, constant. And knowing that, we can recognize that God's acceptance for us does not change.

[11:30] His promises to us do not change. His grace towards us and love for us never changes. God is not fickle or undecided.

He doesn't need to think about something before making a decision. He is dependable and reliable. Can you take comfort in that? Not just this morning, but every day, especially in this time of pandemic.

So this morning, we're going to consider that God is omnipresent and omniscient. These are the attributes of God that really excite me the most.

And theologians often refer to them as the omnis. Omnipresent, there are actually three.

Omnipresent, God is everywhere. Omniscient, God is all-knowing.

And omnipotent, God is all-powerful. So the prefix omni is Latin, and it means all. The omnis, not surprisingly, are properties or attributes or qualities that are wholly unique to God.

[12:40] Humans simply can't relate to these properties on any significant level. But we do benefit directly from them. And so this morning, we're going to focus on omnipresence and omniscience.

So what does omnipresence mean? Well, it's the understanding that God is everywhere in all creation. And I need to be clear here that omnipresence doesn't somehow mean that God is part of or embedded in creation.

Because that's a heresy, an ancient church heresy known as pantheism, that God is part of creation. And that's not true. That's not accurate.

But it indicates to us that God is with his creation at all times. And omnipresence, I've always thought of it this way, omnipresence is kind of a multitasker's dream, isn't it?

Could you imagine if you're a multitasker having the ability to be everywhere at once? Accomplish all your tasks simultaneously? Well, you know what? Research proves that there's no such thing as multitasking.

[13:51] While you may be able to accomplish two tasks or more at the same time, you're not likely doing them to the same degree of efficiency or accuracy or skill as you might be doing if you focused on just one.

But the limits of human understanding really fall short when it comes to the omnipresence of God. It's hard for us to understand that. Because the first thought that we have is likely, but what does that even mean?

How can God possibly be everywhere at once? That's impossible. We can't relate to that. I can barely make it to church on time, you might be thinking, without feeling like I'm still in bed, let alone sitting in a pew or in a chair in the sanctuary of your church.

I want to share a quote from Dr. Randall Rauser's book, *Finding God in the Shack*. And Randall is a good friend of mine. He was a seminary professor of mine and has preached at Braemar in the past.

And this quote speaks to our limited human understanding of the idea of God's omnipresence. So let's hear this. If you go to church on a Sunday morning, you might hear the pastor address the hushed congregation with the words, the Lord is in this place.

[15:09] But what does that mean? That God is only in this place? Isn't he everywhere? Or we might hear the worship leader pray, come Lord into our presence.

Come here. As if God wasn't here already. Where is he coming from? If someone who had never heard of God before were to visit a church, he or she could easily think God is a person, or three people, running around the world visiting different congregations.

Okay, the Holy Spirit will be at Poughkeepsie Pentecostal Church at the 9 a.m. service. Jesus. You go to Albuquerque Alliance for the 9.30, and we'll all meet up at St. Clair's for the 10 a.m. Mass. Rouser says that such a picture is just absurd, of course. God doesn't move around in space. He's not a physical being. He is everywhere. The omnipresence of God is perhaps most beautifully conveyed by the psalmist in Psalm 139, verses 7 to 10.

Where can I go from your spirit, it says? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

[16:27] If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast.

The poetic language here is so beautiful, and it captures, to me, it captures the doctrine of omnipresence perfectly. But it can still be challenging for us to understand what it means to say that God is in the heavens, and in the depths, and everywhere in between.

Is that a struggle for you in your mind as you try to piece it all together? I also want to recognize, can you see that in this passage, God is not just with us, but this passage suggests that He is pursuing us with the kind of matchless love that only He has to offer us.

God will chase you. God will be there for you, whenever you need Him. God loves and cares for us desperately, and will never let go of or give up on us.

You know, there's been seasons or moments in my life where that important truth, that God is always there and He will pursue me, when that truth has kept me going in moments.

[17:44] So as we consider to ponder this idea of God being everywhere, I believe it's helpful for us to recognize that theologians generally agree that God is a non-physical being.

Now generally, I say generally agree, because there are some who believe that there is a physical nature of some kind to God, but that's not what most theologians would say. We shouldn't think of God, therefore, as being physically present to space.

Do you see the limits of our human understanding there again? We need to put something into finite terms to be able to wrap our heads around it. But instead, God is present in virtue of having knowledge of every event in all of creation and having power over each one of those events.

That may be a little bit tricky to understand. God is present in virtue of having knowledge of every event in all of creation and having power over all those events.

And so this is where the omnis, those three unique characteristics of God, intersect. And in fact, many theologians assert that God's omnipresence, his nature of being everywhere, is a direct result of him being omniscient, all-knowing, and omnipotent, which we'll look at next week, all-powerful.

[19:10] So those three omni-characteristics of God are uniquely and intimately interconnected. For me, one of the most powerful aspects of God's omnipresence comes from a concept in the Hebrew Bible of God being, one of the names of God you'll recognize perhaps, is El Roy, R-O-I.

And that translates to mean the God who sees. We first read of that name being given to God by Hagar in the book of Genesis.

Hagar was a servant of Sarai and was sent to Abram, so that's Sarah and Abraham before God changed their names. Hagar was sent to Sarai and Abram to help the couple give birth to an heir because Sarai couldn't have children.

And Hagar, if you know your Old Testament, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. But when Sarai, then known as Sarah, gave birth to her own son Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael were forced to run away.

They were rejected by Abram and Sarah, Abraham and Sarah. And even though Hagar and her son were on the run and in desperate circumstances, God was still with them.

[20 : 31] When Hagar recognized that God was with them, we read in Genesis chapter 16, verse 13. She gave this name to the Lord, that's Elroy.

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her. You are the God who sees me, for she said, I have now seen the one who sees me.

Hagar was just a servant. She was someone who, in her society, would have had little or no value. But despite her station in life, despite her social standing, she recognized that God both saw and valued her.

God was and is the God who sees his children. As we read in Job chapter 34, verse 21, his eyes, God's eyes that is, his eyes are on the ways of mortals.

He sees their every step. Do you ever feel like God doesn't see you in your circumstances, in your challenges, in your tragedies, your grief, what have you?

[21 : 43] Take courage in the words of Proverbs 15, verse 3, where we read, the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

God is not confined to time and space as we are. He's gone before us and he always will be with us. He's already gone before us not only to make a way for us in the world, but also to prepare a place for us at the end of time.

Do you recognize that? So this morning, folks, we're not multitaskers. We're merely mortals. As author Jen Wilkins says when she talks about God's, the nature of God's omnipresence, no, we cannot be in more than one place at a time, she says.

When we reach for omnipresence ourselves, we guarantee that we will be fully present nowhere, spread thin, people of divided attentions, affections, efforts, and loyalties.

Better to trust that these bodies, which tether us to one location, are good limits given by a good God. When we trust him as fully present everywhere, we're finally free to be fully present wherever he has placed us.

[23 : 10] If we can trust in the omnipresence of God that he is everywhere, then we can begin to trust, begin to relax, that he's placed us where we are and in the circumstances that we have for a reason.

So let's take a look at our second omni this morning. Omniscience. So what does it mean to say that God is omniscient? Do you remember?

I mentioned it right at the very beginning. God being omniscient means that he is all-knowing. And not a know-it-all, but knows everything.

So let's unpack that a bit more. By the nature of God being present everywhere at the same time, you can begin to see how the idea of God knowing all things flows fairly logically from that, right?

If he is present in all circumstances, at all times, he would have knowledge of all events. One definition I read this week defined omniscience as, and I'll come back to this definition, so I'll repeat it.

[24 : 16] God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.

I'll read that again because it's quite dense for one sentence. God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act.

Hopefully that's helpful. But hold on to that. Omniscience, omniscience, I-E-N-C-E, means to know all things.

So then to recognize God as being omniscient, C-I-E-N-T, means to affirm that God knows everything. That sounds simple enough, right?

So what does Scripture have to tell us about the omniscience of God? Well, in Job 37, verse 16, Elihu says that God is, quote, the one who is perfect in knowledge.

[25 : 23] And John, the Apostle John, says in 1 John 3, verse 20, that God knows everything. He essentially calls that right out. So let's break this down a bit more.

That definition I read a moment ago said that God who is eternal and infinite, remember the first one, fully knows himself. He's eternal and infinite and he has a complete grasp of himself.

So that in itself is pretty amazing, right? That an infinite God has infinite and complete knowledge of himself. Is that hard to wrap your head around?

And so that definition as well suggests that God knows all things actual. Remember, that was the second thing. Meaning that all things that exist and all things that happen, God knows, God is aware of, God has foreknowledge of them even.

Hebrews 4, verse 13, tells us that nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

[26 : 39] God is aware of everything. Yes, everything. And scripture also reveals to us that God knows the future as we read in Isaiah 46, verses 9 and 10.

Remember the former things, this passage says, those of long ago. I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is none like me.

I make known the end from the beginning. From ancient times, here it is, what is still to come. I say, my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.

God knows your past, your present, and your future. future. In Psalm 139, David reflects on the amazing detail of God's knowledge of our lives.

We're going to go through this a little bit. In verses 1 and 2 of Psalm 139, it says, O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up.

[27 : 47] You discern my thoughts from afar. He knows what we'll say before we say it. We read in verse 4, even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, you know it all together.

And he knows the days of our lives before we're even born. Psalm 139, verse 16, your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Wow. That's amazing, isn't it? And exciting and encouraging. And we also recognize from our definition that God knows all things that are possible, but things that may not even come to be.

There are many times in scripture where God is aware of something happening and yet it doesn't come to be and he knew that as well. So that's where free human choice comes in, where free will comes in.

I've described it before as a choose-your-own-adventure book kind of a perspective and some of you may know what that is and some may not. They existed when I was a kid and they still exist in a different kind of format, but basically it's a story.

[29 : 06] And as you read the book, you come to the end of a section or a chapter and it will say it will allow you to make a decision. And if you choose to rescue the princess, you turn to page 17, so you jump ahead.

If you choose to stay in the forest, it's a different choice and a different page. So while you are freely choosing the path of your story and the story will vary depending on your free will choices, it's an overall story that contains multiple directions, multiple paths, multiple opportunities, some of which may not come to be.

And yet imagine our life like that multiplied to a near infinite number of choices and God knows all those paths. That is astounding.

Theologian Wayne Grudem puts it this way, God has made an incredibly complex and varied universe, but there are thousands upon thousands of other variations or kinds of things that God could have created but didn't.

God's infinite knowledge includes detailed knowledge of what each of those possible creations would have been like and what would have happened in each of them.

[30 : 23] So not only paths, but it's not as though when God created, he had a specific list, checked every single box and that was it. An infinitely creative and creating God could have created anything, absolutely anything.

And this suggests that he would have had awareness of things that he did not create and yet had it considered. So that's pretty amazing as well. That's not something I had ever come across before, but that's an amazing way to look at part of this.

God doesn't need to, as I said before, he doesn't need to think about something before he responds. He doesn't need to stop and recall, well, let me think about it, hmm, to recall something from memory.

memory. And I'm sure all of us can relate to that. Someone asked us a question, we need to run the memory banks, right? We need to double check. We need to go to the hard drive and hopefully the memory's not full.

But I'm sure all of us can relate to that, that God simply knows everything simultaneously. It's mind-blowing for us as finite creatures.

[31 : 30] So this morning, folks, I hope I've left you with a more clear sense of what it means for God to be omnipresent and omniscient, everywhere at once and knowing everything.

And in light of that more clear understanding, how that reality, the fact that God is everywhere at the same time, always, and that he has complete knowledge of everything, I hope that affects the ways that you worship him, the way that you can serve him or feel free to serve him.

My challenge for you, for each of us this morning, as well, is to remember that God knows everything that is done, even in secret. Are there things in your life that no one knows about, that you believe really aren't hurting or affecting anyone else?

But may an actual fact be hurting your relationship or limiting your relationship with God? I invite you to consider this seriously and acknowledge these things before God because, friends, he already knows them.

But I also want to encourage you this morning with the assurance, the encouragement that the same God who knows you, he knows you now, and he's always with you, and he always will know you, and he'll always be with you, as I said, in triumph or in trial, he is with you.

[33 : 08] And through Jesus Christ, God's son, our awesome God who is beyond comprehension, beyond human understanding, in Jesus became a man.

Through Jesus, our transcendent, eternal, awesomely powerful God chose to become imminent and mortal, limited to the bounds of humanity.

He became Emmanuel, God with us. friends, Jesus knows what it's like to be human with all the inherent limitations and restrictions that come with that.

Understanding God's attributes, God's qualities completely may be beyond our comprehension, but God sees and understands what it means to be human better than we ever will.

If you've heard this message this morning and you don't have a relationship with God who is always with you, I invite you to reach out to me, kent at bringourbaptist.com or if you see me in person, come and say that you'd like to talk.

[34 : 22] Because despite what our human perceptions might be, it's never the wrong place to draw near to God or to return to Him. Because He never left you.

This morning, as we reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice, we're celebrating communion. And as I speak about that, just a reminder to get a small glass of water or juice or whatever liquid you may have handy and get a small cracker or piece of bread, whatever you have available again.

Don't feel any pressure or panic to have the perfect thing so that we can celebrate communion together this morning in this unique and special way online. So remember, it's not what you have available to eat and drink right now that are important, but what they represent for us.

So don't panic if you don't have Welch's grape juice on hand because everything will be all right, I promise. So I'm going to share some words of gathering for us as we prepare our hearts for communion.

Gather us in, the lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking, the tired and the aching who long for the nourishment found at your feast.

[35 : 38] Gather us in, the done and the doubting, the wishing and wondering, the puzzled and pondering, who long for the company found at the feast.

Gather us in, the proud and pretentious, the sure and superior, the never inferior, who long for the leveling found at your feast.

Gather us in, the bright and the bustling, the stirs, the shakers, the kind laughter makers, who long for the deeper joys found at your feast.

Gather us in from corner or limelight, from mansion or campsite, from fears and obsession, from tears and depression, from untold excesses, from treasured successes, to meet, to eat, to be given a seat, be joined to the vine, be offered new wine, become like the least, be found at the feast.

Gather us in. This is a table not of the church, the church universal around the world, or Braemar Baptist Church, but this is the Lord's table.

[36 : 57] It's to be made ready for those who love him and those who want to love him more. So come, if you have much faith and if you have little, if you've been here often and if you've not been here for a long time, if you've tried to follow and if you've failed, come not because it's I who invite you, but it is the Lord.

It is his will that those who want him should meet him here. On the night which Jesus was betrayed, he sat at supper with his disciples.

While they were eating, he took a piece of bread and said a blessing, broke it, and gave it to them with the words, This is my body.

It is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Friends, the body of Christ broken for you. Let's eat it together and remember.

Later, he took a cup of wine, saying, This cup is God's new covenant sealed with my blood. Drink from it, all of you, to remember me.

[38 : 17] The body of Christ poured out for you. Let's drink together and remember. Let's pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you've given out your life into our hands.

Now take out our lives into yours. Take us, renew us, and remake us. What we've been is past. What we shall be through you still awaits us. Lead us on. Take us with you. Amen.

On Communion Sundays in our church, we receive a benevolent offering that's used to help folks in our community who need a helping hand. So if you're connected to our church, you can send that in, you can drop it off.

But the reality is, online, that looks different now. So I encourage you to continue giving. Continue looking for opportunities to support people in your community.

[39 : 22] friends and family and strangers that you see who are in need. Because that's what this is about. So I look, I encourage you to look for opportunities to show kindness and mercy to other people, especially during this challenging time.

Our benediction this morning comes from Hebrews 13 verses 20 and 21. Now may the God of peace who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep.

May he equip you with everything good for doing his will. And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. My friends, go in peace knowing that your omnipresent and omniscient God is always with you. and he knows you and cares for you more deeply than anyone else ever could.

Be blessed and have a great week. Go in peace.