

Rooted: What Is God Like?

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[0 : 00] So welcome here everyone for this Sunday, September 17th. I have to look down at my notes because I'm forgetting what day it is almost constantly. My name is Kent Dixon and most of you know that and welcome to people who are here visiting today.

And people, a few faces I haven't seen in a little while. Very good to have you with us this morning. So welcome as all of you who are here know, we do have a podcast and our sermons are available on our website.

So people do tune in other ways throughout the week and over the weeks and months ahead. So welcome to whoever is tuning in, wherever you're from, however you're doing that.

May God touch you and move you in the way that he speaks to you. So Leah touched a bit on the chosen study. We had last, our first one this past Tuesday.

Um, we had, uh, 19 people, I think. Yeah. So we had a really good time of discussion. Um, and, uh, so we're, I'm looking forward to continuing to do that in the coming weeks.

[1 : 04] So Tuesday nights, 645, the chosen right here. So let's take a look at a picture. What is this? Don't answer just yet. I want you to say to me, now this is audience participation.

We have not done that in a little while, but what are some of the things that you see about it? And say them out loud, please. There are no wrong answers. Turrets. Castle. Huge.

What's it made out of? Ancient. Stones. Beautiful. Beautiful. What kind of people would live there? Not me. This is my summer home. No, it's not. So for anyone listening, this is the, uh, we've got a picture on the screen of a big, big castle.

Very, uh, old. So we've heard bricks and stones and big and castle and lots of things like that. It is old. It is indeed made of bricks or stone.

[2 : 06] It seems like extremely wealthy people would probably live here, right? This is not somewhere that I will be living anytime soon. Maybe in heaven? Maybe? But it's impressive, right?

It's intimidating. It is a castle. And extra points, if you saw this picture, went Downton Abbey. Because you're absolutely right. And so all of those things that we said about it are true.

And we would call those things attributes. They're qualities or characteristics that help us to identify or understand something. And so the attributes that we've talked about this morning in relation to this castle is, is it sometimes made of brick?

Is it sometimes a castle? Sometimes old? No. It is all those things all the time. And so this morning we're continuing in our sermon series, Rooted, that we started last week.

And over the coming weeks, we'll be continuing to consider some of the important concepts or truths that are essential for us as followers of Jesus. Things that we need to remember and understand clearly to remain rooted in our faith.

[3 : 20] And this morning, just as we've already identified some of the attributes of a castle, we're going to consider some of the attributes of God. His qualities as we ask the question, what is God like?

Last week we talked about the Bible being essential to Christianity. And today we're going to consider some of the attributes of God. The God that we worship. The God that we sang to and about this morning.

So let me be really clear. I hope this isn't a surprise to you. The depth and breadth of who God is can't easily be captured on a Sunday morning.

Not at all. It can't be captured in an extended series of sermons. Or years of sermons. Or volumes and volumes and volumes of books.

People have tried and have come up short. But so this morning we are going to consider some of the attributes of God. And remember, a lifetime of study, you can't even really scratch the surface.

[4 : 25] So this morning is a high-level overview. Now, if you remember during COVID, maybe you don't. In the fall of 2020, I preached a six-part sermon series called this title, What is God Like?

And it digs much deeper into the attributes of God. So I encourage you to visit our website. You can find it. It's searchable. Or check out our sermons on Spotify or Apple Podcasts to find that series. Because it is in there. So this morning, believe it or not, don't panic when you hear this number. I'm going to touch on 23 different attributes of God this morning.

So did you pack a lunch? But don't be afraid. As I said, this is a high-level overview. And again, you know, as I was thinking about it, I thought, this is 23.

And then I'm thinking, 24, 25, 26. So anyway, I didn't know that. I didn't go through scripture and say, well, these are the top 23 according to Kent.

[5 : 26] No, not at all. But I just picked some highlights. So we've actually already snuck past one. So you will notice this morning, oh, well, what about this?

So you'll hear some that are very familiar and some that are hopefully less familiar. That may cause you to think a little bit more. So you'll probably, hopefully, hear some.

Because as I said, it's an eternal topic. So we've actually, as I say, snuck past one already. And that is God is unity.

So God is fully unified in all of his attributes, just as that castle is that we considered. He exhibits all of the qualities and attributes that he has all the time.

He isn't occasionally love or sometimes holy or perfect once in a while. He is 100% of those qualities all the time.

[6 : 26] So let's continue with this survey. God, well, maybe this is obvious, exists. And maybe that seems something odd for a pastor to say in a sermon.

But the Bible thought it was important enough to mention it right out of the gate in Genesis 1.1.

Right away. And the Bible assumes, as a matter of fact, that God exists.

It presents him as creator. It doesn't talk about, well, when God was born, and this is what he was like as he grew up. No. God was.

God is. God always shall be. No proof of existence or origin. God was there. God was. In Romans 1.19 and 20, and I'm going to be touching on lots of different passages and verses, so don't panic because you'll end up with paper cuts.

Romans 1.19 and 20, Paul writes, For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

[7 : 42] So they are without excuse. Every person has an inner sense that God exists. God exists. And all creation, as we talked about a bit last week, shows us that God exists.

Human beings being created in God's image, at least at our best, and when we're submitted to God, we show glimpses of God's character. And we'll touch on some of these attributes that we display that are because we are created in the image of God.

God is independent. God doesn't need anything or anyone else in creation for anything. Have you ever thought about that before?

Acts 17.24 and 25 says, The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.

Nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

[8 : 48] Zephaniah 3.24 says, God is unchanging.

God himself says in Malachi 3.6, For I, the Lord, do not change. Therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.

God is unchangeable in who he is. He's unchangeable in what he has done, what he will do, his promises to us. He's unchangeable in what he is.

He's totally trustworthy in what he has said. God is eternal. Psalm 90 verse 2 says, Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

God is not limited or restricted or confined to time. I actually thought about that and it struck me again. God created time.

[10 : 19] God uses time for his own purposes. He's not limited by it. It is a tool that he uses. God is omnipresent. Isaiah 57 verse 15 says, For thus says the one who is high and lifted up, who inhabits

eternity, whose name is holy.

I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

God is limited, not limited, by space or place either. He's present everywhere at the same time. God is spirit.

John 4 verse 24 says, God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. We can recognize that everything we interact with, for the most part, is made of matter.

It is composed of atoms. It has a physical presence. But God exists in such a way that he is not composed of any physical presence.

[11:38] For people that you know who don't believe in God and think you are nuts for believing in him, this may be one of their biggest arguments. Well, you can't see him. You can't touch him.

How could he be real? It's a limited perspective. God is invisible. Relates directly to him being spirit.

John 1 verse 18 says, No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

He has made him known. This directly connects to the fact that God is spirit, and since he is spirit, he is invisible. John 14 verse 9, Jesus said to him, the verse there, John 14 verse 9, Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long and you still don't know me, Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? God is omniscient.

1 John 3, 19 and 20 says, By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him. For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and he knows everything.

[13:08] So God is always fully aware of everything. Nothing catches him by surprise. God never says, Whoa, I didn't see that coming. God, nothing is unexpected to him.

Nothing is a surprise. Nothing is news to him. I talked to one of my professors in seminary and I said, Okay, here's my understanding of human free will in the light of the sovereignty of God.

And he said, Uh-oh. And I said, We have free will because anything we could possibly choose is already known to God. And he said, You're on to something.

And I said, So we have free will in the light of the relatively infinite number of choices we could maybe make. God is more infinite than that.

So our free will, our seemingly endless opportunities and choices and paths that we might choose are still within God's understanding.

[14:11] God has full awareness of all things that have happened or will happen and he will act in every circumstance. He knows how he will act.

God is wise. Isaiah 58, verse 8-9. You know this. For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways your ways, declares the Lord.

For the heavens are higher than the earth. For as high as the heavens are than the earth. Oh, I'm messing that up. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

God's plans and his goals are always the best possible. And he uses the best possible ways to achieve them. God is truthful.

Numbers 23, verse 19 says, God is not man. That he should lie. Or a son of man that he should change his mind.

[15:18] Has he said and will he not do it? Or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it? Whatever God has said or promised he will do, we can trust that he will do it.

Do you ever need that kind of reassurance in your life? The reassurance in your circumstances that what someone says they'll actually do. What someone told you is actually true.

You can only find that with God. We can count on God to honor and be faithful to any promise, every promise he has ever made.

God is good. Luke 18, verse 19 says, And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

You've heard me say this before as a former communications guy. Language is valuable to me and I also recognize how cheaply we often use it.

[16:25] We throw the word good around an awful lot, don't we? Good is a three-star rating on a five-star scale. Yeah, it was good. Did you like the movie?

It was good. Is that a good cheeseburger? Yeah, it was good. And sometimes, can you recognize that good for us can mean better than bad?

Eh. But when we consider that God is the standard for goodness, can you see that being elevated? Maybe we can reclaim good a little bit, maybe.

God is holy. Psalm 99 verse 9 says, Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy mountain. For the Lord our God is holy. God's holy nature means that he is completely separated from sin. He's also devoted to seeking his own honor in everything he has made.

[17:27] seeking to reflect his character and his attributes and ultimately bring glory back to himself. God is jealous.

Exodus 20 verse 5 says, You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. Just as God seeks to bring glory to himself, he will not abide the attention or glory being given to something or someone else.

And if you're thinking, sheesh, that sounds prideful, doesn't it? Remember that God's motives are always pure. and ultimately who more than God deserves the worship and glory that we're talking about?

We've just touched on some of his qualities and I think that's all worthy of all of it, all the attention. God wills what he wills.

[18:40] Ephesians 1 verse 11 says, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

God's will is ultimately the reason behind how and why everything happens. And God chooses what he will do and what he will not do.

God's will, let me be clear on this one, God's will is never behind something that ultimately involves sin or evil. Did you catch that?

So the idea that God has allowed something sinful or evil to happen is counter to his nature. I'm reading a couple books on it right now.

Aside from Satan and his demons being very clearly God's enemies, and the fact that God tells us, the Bible tells us that he hates sin, the relationship between God's will and evil is not something God has chosen to reveal to us.

[19:54] So to try and pin responsibility for something evil that happens directly to God is not correct, but we can also recognize this is not something God has chosen to reveal to us.

And if that sounds like a cop-out, that's unfortunate. I'm sorry, but Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 reminds us the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

God is God and we are not. God has freedom. Psalm 115, verse 3, our God is in the heavens. He does all that he pleases. As we touched on, God is not dependent on or reliant upon anything beyond himself to do his will.

And nothing and no one can prevent God's will from happening. God is completely free to do whatever he wants to do.

[21:10] God is omnipotent. Genesis 18, verse 14 says, Is anything too hard for the Lord?

At the appointed time I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son. And you know the story of Abraham and Sarah. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

God is fully capable of doing whatever he wants to do. And there are no limits to his power. God is perfect.

Matthew 5, verse 48 says, You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Now the perfection we're being called to there is not something we have to do on our own.

Thank you, Lord. perfect. It's another descriptor that gets watered down. That's a five star on a five star scale.

[22:11] Google review. It's watered down. But if you think of it this way, in everything that God does, he sets the standards and he exceeds the standards.

God sets and achieves his own bar of measurement. God is beautiful. Psalm 27 verse four.

One thing I asked of the Lord that I will seek after, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

Again, we recognize beautiful, right? We recognize a human understanding of adjectives and descriptors fall short when being applied to God.

Recognizing that all the manifestations and qualities that we would call beauty or beautiful, God possesses all of those qualities, all the qualities that we find most desirable, that catch our attention, that catch our eye, and also in the purest form without any corruption of sin.

[23 : 29] The most beautiful sunset, the most perfect piece of pie, all of the sensations that we experience in our lives, that we get joy from, are just a fraction of what we find in God himself.

And the good news is, this God can be known. God can be known, this God that we're talking about. John 17 verse 3, and this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I'll try and keep it together. This may be one of the most breathtaking qualities that God possesses. This God, the God that we have been exploring, some of his attributes this morning, can be personally known by us.

Not just in understanding or head knowledge, this is not just a lecture, but this is about a relationship. In the sense of developing a personal relationship between you and God that is possible through Jesus Christ.

God is wrathful towards sin. Wrathful is a good word. John 3 verse 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

[24 : 49] whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. It's made clear to us in the Bible many times that God hates sin, and that anyone who remains in sin and doesn't turn to God will spend eternity apart from him.

It's a distasteful message in churches these days. I'm not supposed to stand up here and make you feel guilty or feel bad about yourself or feel like you need to repent of anything, yet here I am. God is righteous and just. There's an even balance to that. See? God is wrathful towards sin and yet he is righteous and just.

Deuteronomy 32 verse 4 says, the rock, his work is perfect for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

God hates sin as we've just talked about, but he is also a God of balance, a God of grace and mercy and justice and eternal patience.

[26 : 14] God's justice will be served, make no mistake, but he will judge people according to how they have chosen to act, how they have chosen to speak, the places where they have chosen to put their attention and their desire, particularly if those things are ungodly.

God will ultimately punish sin, there's no question, and the choice to stubbornly or pridefully stand apart from him will be judged as well, but God is also able to forgive our sin through Christ Jesus, through his death and sacrifice and his resurrection when we repent of our sin and return to God. Friends, God is love. 1 John 4, 8, anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

I believe this may be the most important attribute about God that we can recognize, because it's God's love for you and for me and for all creation that shapes and drives so much of our understanding of all of his other attributes.

In the context of God's great love, you can have understanding, deeper understanding for so many of these other things. So we're done. I hope this survey of God's attributes, as I said, a brief one, a high-level overview, has been an encouraging and uplifting reminder that this is our God.

[27 : 58] This is what he is like. This is not an imagined God. This is who he is. This is who the Bible declares him to be. This is who Jesus demonstrated as God to be when he was on earth.

Let's close in prayer. Father God, thank you for revealing so much to us about who you are, your attributes and your qualities. Thank you that you have made human beings in your image, so much so that we can deeply resonate with many of your qualities.

We can see them in ourselves and others in some ways. Father, remind us that as human beings loved by you, you've called us to show love and care to each other and everyone we meet.

Remind us of that in our busy lives, Lord, when it can become so easy to become distracted, selfish, or anxious. God, Father, thank you, thank you, thank you for the many ways that we are not at all like you.

May we grow to understand those attributes even more and be reminded that you alone are worthy to receive glory and honor and praise and power and all authority.

[29 : 22] And we declare our love for you boldly here today because you first loved us. Father, you have chosen us and you have called us your own.

We pray all these things in the precious and powerful name of your Son and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.