

One God

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Date: 12 June 2022

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[0 : 00] I'm Ambu, thanks for reading. Let me say as I begin that God wants us to boast. He wants us to be people who stand tall and take pride and gladly speak out and celebrate something in our lives.

! God actually wants us to boast. And the thing that God wants us to boast about in our lives is that we know him. We know God.

Listen to Jeremiah 9 verses 23 and 24. It's on the screen here. This is what the Lord says. That's such a wonderful couple of verses.

It's saying absolutely don't spend your life boasting about yourself, rattling on about how super clever or fit and healthy or cash rich you are.

Don't boast about that stuff. Rather, boast that you know me, says the Lord. When you stand back and think about it, we are meant to say it is just a stunning thing, isn't it?

[1 : 30] To be able to say of the almighty God, the creator of all, we know him. It's a very simple thing to say, stunning.

We can. We can. Because the Lord God has revealed himself to us. We, his creatures, tiny though we are, we can truly, genuinely and personally know our God.

I think to myself, I should know this. If that really got under my skin, what else in my life could I ever want to boast about compared to this?

That I actually know the living God. I want to introduce like this. Over this coming month of Sundays, what we're going to do is we're going to seek to have the understanding to know him more.

Today is Trinity Sunday, we've said. And drawing together everything that God has said and shown of himself, the Christian church has declared for centuries and centuries, our God is three in one.

[2 : 38] That is, we believe in one God. And we believe in one God who exists in three persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Three distinct persons, each of them fully divine, who exist together as one God. This doctrine of the Trinity, we call it, the three in one.

Although mention of it might make you think, ah, I don't get it, it doesn't make sense, please could we not complicate things? You've got to know that what we're talking about here takes us to the heart of the nature of God himself.

The one we're made to love and know. And that's what I want to say at the start of this month. The Trinity is not some dry puzzle to be solved or ignored.

It's about who God is. It's about who he's shown himself to be. See this picture of the Queen on the screen.

[3 : 41] It's fuzzy and vague. Of course it's the Queen, you know that. You can see her eyes and her hat. You're just not seeing her very truly or sharply or clearly.

My prayer is that as we spend time carefully considering God as he's shown himself to be, we will start to see him more truly, more sharply, more beautifully, clearly.

It's what we want to do in our lives. And we should pray that as we grow in understanding of our God, well, we'll know him more richly. We'll love him more deeply.

And actually we'll be moved to boast in him all the more gladly. We know him. We know him, this God of ours. So that's just to introduce this coming month.

What we're going to do this morning is talk about the oneness of God. We believe in one God. We don't believe in a range of God working together in the heavens.

[4 : 50] We don't believe in no God. We believe in one God. And so if you've got your Red Bibles in front of you, would you turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 6 and verses 4 and 5?

This is where we're going to spend our time this morning with these super significant, just a couple of verses really, spoken by Moses to the people of Israel. Deuteronomy 6 and verses 4 to 5.

Let me say what's going on. At this point in time, God's people, Israel, chosen by him, have been rescued from slavery in Egypt. They've come to Mount Sinai.

They've travelled through the wilderness. They stand on the edges of the promised land. And as they do that, Moses speaks to all the people together. And this is what he says.

Let me read Deuteronomy 6, 4 and 5. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

[5 : 56] In Judaism, these words, they form the beginning of what's called the Shema. Observant Jews recite these words and others, the Shema, twice a day.

They're a pledge of allegiance. They're a most important prayer. They're traditionally the last words cited before a person's death because they capture the heart of who God is and how to relate to him.

Let's walk through it together. First, says Moses in these verses, hear this about the Lord our God. So at the very start of verse 4, hear, O Israel, is Moses saying, listen up, I'm telling you something. Maybe this is too straightforward. He's not saying, let's get together and imagine how we'd like together to think about God. But rather, I'm telling you about him.

And this is very important. I meet so many people in Orchard Park and elsewhere who basically say, I don't believe in God. I don't really need him.

[7 : 05] As though any kind of belief in God these days is really just for weak people like you, who are scared and needy and trying to make your life feel better by imagining there's someone nice who will look after you.

And gods and fairies and guardian angels, they're all the same silly imaginings. Moses says, no. The creator of all has appeared to Moses and spoken with Moses and shown Moses his glory. And now Moses the prophet speaks. Listen. As I tell you the truth about the Lord our God. To the people of Israel here, I'm telling you about our God.

Not stuff about the divine in general and what people think about our God. He's talking about the Lord God who made the earth and the heavens. The Lord God who chose Abraham and appeared to Moses and saved his people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and brought them to himself and led them through the desert and fed them.

Not a figment of their imagination like a fairy at the bottom of the garden, but rather the Lord our God whom we have experienced, who has loved us.

[8 : 34] Well then what about him? What about this all creating, loving, acting, ruling in history Lord? Well come to it now.

We've got there. Point two next. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is one. Says Moses. What does this mean? What does it mean that the Lord is one? First off, it means the Lord is unique. There is no other.

Just a couple of chapters before this, Moses challenged the people as he talked to them. Chapter 4 verse 32 on. Listen to this. Ask now about the former days, long before your time.

From the day God created human beings on the earth. Ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened? Has anything like it ever been heard of?

[9 : 35] Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire as you have and lived? Answer no. Has any God ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation?

By testings, signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? Any other God done that? Answer? No. You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God.

Besides him, there is no other. And you're meant to feel the force of that. In a world where all sorts of people believe in all sorts of different gods, says Moses, our God, who created us all, is one of a kind.

Because he's spoken and acted and waged war and taken a nation for himself. Any other so-called God done that? No. Because the Lord is God.

[10 : 48] In verse 39, It's not just that the true God stands out uniquely amongst the gods.

Think of it like this. It's not just that our God is top of the gods league, like Manchester City winning the premiership over weaker rivals. There are no weaker gods.

There are no other gods. He's in a league of his own. Just him. See this mentioned again, just a touch later on.

Deuteronomy 32, 39. Same ideas. Says God, See now that I myself am he, there is no God besides me.

I put to death and I bring to life. I have wounded and I will heal. And no one can deliver out of my hand. You see this creator God rescues and rules unstoppably.

[11 : 59] He has no rivals. For there is no God besides me. The Lord is one. He's unique in a league of his own.

There is no other. And we're taking a bit of time over this. Back in Deuteronomy 6, there's a touch more to say, I think. The Lord is one.

Says something a touch more. It says something about who he is in himself. His nature. That is, the Lord is one being.

There is only one of him. He's not divided or cut up or spread out. And back then, a long time ago, in the surrounding culture, people worshipped a God called Baal.

Or was it a number of different Baals? Like a club of gods. Because different cities have different little gods and you'd worship different forms of him or it in different places.

[13 : 13] And how confusing. Says Moses to the people, the Lord is one. In his nature, one undivided being.

And that's the spade work in this passage. Drawing all this together, this then is what we believe. This is what's true.

We believe in one God, the Lord. So imagine a thick line. And below the line, below the line is us. Creatures. You and me and all people. We're created. We're given life. We owe our lives to another.

We're totally dependent. Us and all of creation. And angels and demons and any other supernatural beings. Everything. And then think above the thick line, if you like, the one who creates and rules and cares for us and all of creation.

[14 : 28] What do you see above the line? You see one God. The Lord. He's unique.

There is no other. The one and only true God. The creator of all. Our sole ruler. The one who deserves our worship.

We believe in one God. So. To which maybe you might say, do you know what? That's what I've always thought.

I've always thought there's one God. So tell me something new. Well, let's just take some time now and work through a little bit the so what. So what that our God is one.

Well, here's the thing. Firstly, and let me put it like this. We deny that there are many gods. Above the thick line, it is wrong to believe that there are many gods.

[15 : 30] Maybe you don't think this yourself. It is worth saying, through history, most people have lived believing, often in fear, of many gods ruling over them or around them.

It's how many people have lived all through history. For sure, in the nations around Israel thousands of years ago. or think of the Greek gods, Zeus and Hera and Poseidon and all that lot fighting between themselves and sporting with humans.

This isn't personally relevant. Think of the Viking gods, Odin and Thor and Frey, give you Wednesday and Thursday and Friday. The Viking gods of wisdom and thunder and fertility to fear and sacrifice to and try to manipulate.

If you say, come on, all that old stuff, it's all make-believe, you're right. It is. But today, too, in our world, polytheism, a belief in many gods, is all over the place.

It's pretty complicated. It's pretty mixed, what that looks like. But amongst the beliefs of 1.2 billion Hindus in our world, think of Vishnu and Shiva and Gensha and so on.

[16 : 51] All god forms, maybe, of one divine power, Brahman. Or, this may feel far from you, think of the Shinto religion in Japan and elsewhere.

And they have the kami, the many deities which inhabit all things. That's why there's so many shrines. Or some of the many traditional African religions in which you pray to powerful spirits and high gods and low gods all around the place and so on.

I don't know firsthand what that feels like. I can imagine the confusion and the uncertainty and the fear of trying to connect with these many gods, find out what pleases them, these gods, who are no gods at all.

So, we deny that there are many gods. By the way, you mustn't imagine that Father, Son, and Spirit are three gods sitting round a fire together loving each other.

You mustn't imagine Jesus, the loving Son, acting by himself and twisting his angry Father's arm to make him love us. We don't believe in three gods, rival gods.

[18:15] The Lord, our God, is one. So, we say no to many gods. We deny also, by the way, very obviously, that there is no God. Not many, not zero, one.

There's not no God. Maybe that's much more relevant for us because lots of people around us today, you and I know this, don't even bother anymore arguing that there's no God.

no need to argue for that. It's just assumed today amongst our colleagues and classmates and friends. It is so obvious to your classmates at school that God doesn't exist.

It's not even a conversation to be had. And yet, how much of our society's deep despair and aimlessness and uncertainty about even who we are flows from assuming that above the thick line there's just nothing.

Maybe you'd think this, could you imagine it? No God, no creator equals no meaning, no purpose, no hope for you.

[19:27] why would you even carry on? But we say it's not like that. Not because we want to, not because we think it, but because the Lord has made himself known.

Deuteronomy 6 verse 4, hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, one God. to which we say so what then?

Positively. Well here we go, it means positively in our lives today there should be only one response. When you come to believe, when you hear and know that there is one God and when you turn to this one creator, sustainer, ruler and saviour, the Lord, what should you do?

Deuteronomy 6 verse 5 now, love him. Deuteronomy 6 5, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

What does that mean for us? To love our God, the one God, it means total devotion and deep affection.

[20:47] Our lives committed to him, alone. Do you know this? There are no other gods who deserve your worship. There is no other God who loves you and draws near to you.

This one God who has come to us in Christ, lived for us, saved us. This one Lord is everything to his people and so we are to pledge absolute loving devotion to him.

In this verse, do you see how it's spelt out? Love him with all your heart and all your soul. This is total devotion from the inside out with all my heart, my mind and my will driving my thoughts and my passions devoted to him.

all my soul, my whole being, his, all my strength, my might, my resources, my wealth, everything I have committed to him, this one Lord of mine.

Every time I go to a wedding or take a wedding and I hear the declarations and the vows, I find them breathtaking. Because you know this, at a wedding the vows are so definite.

[22:09] Will you take her to be your wife and forsaking all others be faithful to her as long as you both shall live? He vows, I will. Later, as he gives the ring, all that I am I give to you and all that I have I share with you.

Total exclusive devotion. It's why some people are scared of getting married because it means you burn all your bridges and you promise I'll love no others, just you.

In a similar way, love the Lord. Not a little bit of God in my life. No casual flirting with other so-called gods.

That's what it means. You can't love the Lord and then join the Freemasons and call on the nameless one of a hundred names.

You can't turn to the Lord and love him and hold on to the gods of your first religion. And, by the way, says Jesus, you can't serve both God and mammon, the God of money.

[23:21] You can't split your devotion. No, you are the Lord our God and so forsaking all others because there are no other gods, we devote ourselves to you.

God and God. This love for our one God, it finds its expression here in glad obedience.

Just notice this before we finish. Flowing on from verse five that Ambu read to us, Moses makes our loving devotion to our one God concrete. These commandments that I give you today from the Lord your God are to be on your heart.

Take them on your heart and do them. Verse seven, impress them on your children. Lead your family in glad obedience to his commandments.

Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up. Will we? Tie these commandments as a symbol on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

[24 : 29] Write them on the door frames of your house and on your gates. Why? Because we love him and we'll take his commandments and obey him and him alone because he is the Lord our God, this God who is one.

This month of Sundays now and through June, the doctrine of the Trinity, there's all sorts of things that will flow from this. In a world like ours, full of gods, in a world full of ours, full of I'd like to think of God as, this is who our God has shown himself to be, that we might know him clearly and truly.

Do you get the message of Deuteronomy 6 this morning? Four words, one God, love him. One God, love him. this one being, our unique creator and ruler who has first loved us in and through the Lord Jesus, this only God, this one deserving of our worship, he is the Lord.

And so the message of Deuteronomy 6 is would you turn your back on false gods? Would you turn your back on fake gods? Would you stop trying to seek your security and safety in anyone and anything else?

Would you stop serving other things? Turn to him, come to him alone and love him alone, love him deeply and totally and obediently with his help.

[26 : 14] And? Well when we consider as we go on this month that this one God exists forever as three distinct loving persons, God the Father who sends God the Son to save the world, who then sends God the Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might cry out, Abba Father.

As well as it's stretching our minds, we should pray that the wonderful truth of who he is, one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit would move us to love him more deeply and then boast in him all the more gladly.

Because if we really got hold of this, what else in our lives could we ever want to boast about compared to this? We know him, we know the Lord who is one.

And let me lead us in a prayer together, let's pray. hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Thank you, our Father, that you have not left us in the dark, you have shown yourself to us. thank you that you, Father, Son and Spirit, reign in heaven, one Lord over all, our one creator, our one ruler without rival or competition, our one saviour.

[28 : 03] God. Our Father, we live in a world of many beliefs, in many gods. May we listen to you as you have shown yourself to us.

And the more we grasp who you are, would you move us together as one to love you deeply and radically and obediently, our one God who has loved us so, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.