

In the Beginning...God

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[0 : 00] All right, please, please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 113. I'm going to read that Psalm as we begin this time in his word, as we set forward the kind of an introduction to this theme of God.

Psalm 113, authored by an unknown writer. He writes, praise the Lord.

Praise, O servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.

[1 : 17] He gives the barren women a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the Lord. There's a lot of different praises that we can offer with our lips to the Lord.

We can praise God for the things that he has done in our lives. We can praise God for the things that he just does in our lives generally, just for his creation.

But there's another area that I want to talk about today that we can praise him. We can praise him for who he is.

This psalm, this psalm 113 that we've just read, was known as a festival song, and it was sung as a nation when they came to Jerusalem during three of the festivals.

It was also a psalm that a family would read together as they came before the Lord at Passover. And there's two distinct things that they're making emphasis towards.

[2 : 24] One, his greatness, and secondly, his goodness. They're praising God for who he is.

A couple things that I want you to notice here. It's talking about Lord Jehovah, Yahweh, the personal God. They are praising a God they know.

They are not praising the God creator Elohim, but they are praising the part of him that is the personal God, the God that has provided for them, that knows them, that has revealed himself to his people.

You see, this God Yahweh, this Jehovah God, is a personal God. A God to be known. What's interesting from this is that it is a God who is unknown, is quite easy to ignore, isn't he?

We do not know his name, or we do not know nothing about him. It's simple to ignore him. But a God that is known, that your people have attested to, have sung praises about, have written for generations and generations, is a God that is very difficult to ignore.

[3 : 57] The prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 9, 23, 24, wrote the following. Simply said, let not the wise man boast in his wisdom.

Let not the wise man boast in his strength. Let not the rich man boast in his riches. But let him who boasts in this, that he knows and understands me.

That he knows and understands me. That I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these things I delight, declares the Lord. Understand for a second what the prophet is communicating.

If there is one thing, one thing, that you can boast about, there is one thing God wants you to do, to be proud of, is that you would understand me.

[5 : 19] Let me ask you just a very simple question. Is this something that you can boast about? Could you boast to someone that you know God?

Your relationship with God. Not from your side, but from his side. Maybe a little.

Perhaps in some areas. In some situations. But let me ask you this question in a slightly different way.

What is the most distinguishing quality about you? Is it that you know the living God?

Do people around you know that you know the true and living God?

[6 : 28] I'm not talking about someone who knows a lot about God. Or man, they know a lot about their Bible. I'm talking about someone being able to say, yeah, I know George or Bertha or Martha or Jim or Michael or whoever.

Man, they know God. They know God. Imagine having that being said about you. It just says we've been in Ephesians and we've been learning about walking.

Walking in how we carry on our lives. To be able to brag. To be able to brag. Not brag in that worldly sense. But to boast in the sense that that person walks with God.

Do you want to be known as someone who does? My prayer right here, right now is that you do.

My prayer is that you want to know God. That you want to be known for someone who walks with the Lord. My prayer is that you will follow the prophet Hosea's words.

[7 : 42] When he writes in Hosea 6.3, when he says, Let us know. Let us press on to know the Lord. Just think of that idea to press on.

To push forward. To set it as a goal. Have this as our mindset. We are going to, as a group of people, press on to know God.

My desire is that through this time together, we can both know the Lord. But that we will press on to know the Lord. Not verses about God.

But my prayer is that you will come to know God. In perhaps a new and living way. Now in this type of sermon, there's a lot of definitions that need to be used.

And today I want to set kind of the parameters about what we're going to be learning over the next couple of weeks. Now first of all, let me define what I mean by knowledge.

[8 : 45] What I'm not, I'm not talking about that we are coming together today to learn facts about God. We're not learning about facts.

We're talking about getting a knowledge of something that means something. So we're going to be learning a knowledge about God that has to mean something.

It is a knowledge as truth. Not a truth, but the truth. One writer simply writes true truth. Our knowledge of God has to define, has to determine, and has to direct everything in our life.

If God is God eternal, if God is creator over all things, our knowledge of him, must determine our thoughts, must determine our actions.

The writer A.W. Tozer once wrote, what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

[9 : 51] When God comes into our minds, when we think about God, is the most important thing about us. You see, when it comes to the subject of God, what we think about him matters immensely.

If we have a high view of God, this will lead to high, holy living. We will live our lives in light of a holy God. This will generate real worship.

Worship that God has called us to. And it will also lead to what's called triumphant, transcendent living. Meaning living in God's will.

A low view of God leads to low living, trivial worship, and sadly wrong believing.

You see, what you and I think about God matters immensely. And that's why I want to begin this new series today on God. The reformer John Calvin wrote, it is evident that man never attains to a true knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God.

[11 : 18] And come down after such contemplation to look into himself. You've heard me paraphrase John Piper before on this subject, but he simply says, nobody goes to the Grand Canyon to have big, majestic, mighty thoughts about one self.

To look on God is to be consumed with God. I remember the first time that I went to the Grand Canyon. You've heard about it.

You've seen pictures. I've watched fly-by movies. But there's nothing that could explain the sense of sitting there on the lip of something that is so big.

In fact, it's the same experience I had when I visited British Columbia. When I came and I went in the mountains on a sunny day and I was able to see the mountains that surround us.

It was astonishing. I did not come away with a sense of thinking how great I was, but I was moved to worship our Lord.

[12:42] You see, we get to know God better by having a right understanding about him. As many of you know, I used to live in L.A. and once in a while you'd meet people, you'd know people who knew famous actors or actresses and one of the most common statements that I would always get made is, man, they are so much know what you would think they are.

Or they are just not like they appear on TV. And you want to kind of go, well, of course not. They're playing a role. It's make believe.

And sometimes we can be that way with God. We have impressions of God. We've heard others talk about God or others worship God or others sing about God.

But it's a God that we have not experienced. The reality is the way to know God is to spend time with God.

Quality time. I remember as a kid, you could meet someone and by the end of the day, you'd be best friends. Right? Your kid would go to camp and they'd come back.

[13:58] Hey, I met my best friends. We're going to be friends for life. As adults, you know, we don't trust anybody until about 20 years have passed. But it's kind of the same thing with God.

It just doesn't happen overnight. It takes time. There's many different aspects that God needs to reveal himself to us as we walk with him.

As I said, many people have impressions about God. Many people have thoughts about God. Many people have opinions about God. But the question is, do they really know God?

In case you haven't picked up on this yet, the goal of this teaching series is that I will seek to promote a high view of God.

There's two ways I want us to do this. One, I want to be able to preach some of the attributes of God and I'm going to explain what some of those attributes are today.

[15:01] But I also want to have some sermons on how we are to respond in everyday life to true knowledge of God.

how we worship, how we live, how we serve, how we invest our time, our talent, our treasure.

How do we steward our children? How do we love our spouses? Reality is, how our knowledge of God goes, so goes the entire flow of our life.

Reality is, you cannot be wrong about God. And be right about everything else. You see, to know God is to know everything else around them.

Listen, we know that this is an unchanging world. Just every single day, we watch the news, we read what's online, and we want to know what's going on in the world.

[16:07] We see this change with COVID. We do not know the results. But there's one thing that we do know, is that God has got this.

This isn't beyond the parameters of his understanding. This is not beyond the God that is known, the God who is unchanging. So, an important question that needs to get asked.

What is an attribute? What is an attribute? And I want to define this for you. An attribute refers to a quality or characteristic that belongs to a person.

God's attributes, when we speak about attributes, define and describe who God is, who and what God is. Now, when we think of these attributes, we make this one common mistake.

We tend to think of attributes in a human personal sense. Let me try to explain it using this type of imagery.

[17:13] I am a human being. I don't need to try to be human. I just am. Now, I can be a kind human being or I can be a cruel human being.

No matter if I'm kind or cruel, I'm still human. Whether I'm moody or I'm thoughtful, I am still human. And those type of things go in and out.

So, some people might be able to say, you know what, I know BK, he's a real moody guy. And maybe in another sense, some people may say, you know what, I know him as a kind and generous man.

Both could be true. But it doesn't take away from the reality that I am human. But when we talk about God and his attributes, it's entirely different.

Because everything that God is, is who he is and what he is. Alright? As an example, God is almighty.

[18 : 15] God doesn't have to try to be almighty. God is always almighty. God doesn't have to be holy. Alright, I'm going to do these things.

He's not known for having to do holy things to be holy. He is holy. Therefore, everything that he does is holy.

He doesn't have to decide, I'm going to do this because this is right or just. It's, when God does it, it is right and just.

This is an important thing to understand. So, he's all his things at all times. God is loving. He doesn't have to work at being loving. He doesn't have to say his mind, oh, I'm going to be loving to this group of people today.

No, he's always loving to them at all times. times. So, I want to give you some facts.

[19 : 19] I want to give you five facts about the attributes of God. Five facts about who God is. And I hope this will help you understand more about our God as we continue on in the sermon series.

Fact number one, God is incomparable. incomparable. God is incomparable. Exodus 15, 11 says, Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?

Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? No one, right?

The question begs no one.

Deuteronomy 3, 24. For what God is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? Ding, answer, no one. The reality is you and I, we compare all the time.

We compare all the time. And for you of our friends that are from the Philippines, you're going to get this analogy really simply. When I first got to Manila, I kind of Facebook quoted the saying, this traffic is crazy.

[20 : 26] And I had a friend from Toronto who wrote back, man, yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. Traffic is really bad here too. Okay, first of all, Toronto, which I've lived in for many years, has about 2 million people.

Manila has two-thirds of Canada living in the city. All right? Traffic doesn't move. It's known as the world's largest parking lot. We're talking about city streets which were six to eight lanes wide, bumper to bumper to bumper.

We compare there. There is no comparison. 20 million to 2 million people in the city, no comparison. It's the same thing with God. Psalm 71, 19. Oh God, who is like you?

No one. Micah 7, 18. Who is a God like you? No one. No one is like God.

God. Now, I also want us to understand something about how he is so incomparable.

[21 : 34] There's a big truth here. The fact of the matter is, you and I can only know God as much as he has chosen to reveal about himself.

With someone like us, we can meet someone, we can invest time, we're going to know them better. But the reality is, we're only going to know what they reveal about themselves.

When we know God, that doesn't mean we're going to know everything about God. And this is the mistake sometimes scholars or theologians make.

And then they start to put God in these boxes, thinking that they understand everything. the reality is, we can only know and be certain about what God has chosen to reveal about himself to us.

Doesn't mean we can't know a lot. Doesn't mean we can't define certain elements of who he is. But what it means is, this God is infinite.

[22 : 42] infinite. And if we ever get to a point of thinking that we can understand an infinite God, we've gone beyond the stages of sanity. But that doesn't mean we cannot know God.

Because there's a subsection of Christianity that's kind of broken off, which are saying, you know what, since we can't know everything, how can we be certain about God?

Let's not even bother with him. No, no, no. That's not what I'm saying, and that is particularly wrong. God has chosen to reveal himself in some very specific ways in his word.

And we are to know him as he has chosen the best way to know him and how we are to know him and what we are to know him.

So that's fact number one. God is incomparable. Nothing compares to God. Fact number two. That there is actually two type of names that are used to communicate God's attributes.

[23 : 50] All right? I'm going to give you a little bit of class in theology. There's what theologians called God's incommunicable attributes. And that kind of means like it sounds like he's saying that he's not communicating them.

That's not what it means. So we have God's incommunicable attributes and God's communicable attributes. Now that word incommunicable means that those are the attributes that God has in God alone.

Those are the attributes that God does not share with us. God is omnipresent. That means he is everywhere. God is all-knowing. He knows everything.

That's what an incommunicable attribute means. It hasn't been communicated to us. It hasn't been given to us. It is his and his alone. It's part of his nature.

Only God are these things. Now, there's other attributes such as God's truth, justice, love, wisdom. [24 : 57] Those are what's known as communicable attributes. That means God share those attributes with us. we can learn wisdom, learn to be loving, learn to love justice.

Those are obviously pale comparisons to God's perfect love, perfect wisdom, and perfect justice, but we as people, as his created beings, created in his image, we can have those attributes too. Fact number three. So the first one is that God's, we understand that he is himself, there's no one like him, that he is incomparable, we understand that there are two names, he is both incommunicable and he has communicable attributes, and here's the other fact, is the attributes are gone, God, are found equally in the entire Godhead.

And what I mean by this is every attribute that is true of God is true of Jesus and is true of the Holy Spirit. Whatever is true of one is true of the Trinity.

That means God is not more holy than Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not more loving than God and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not more wise than God and the Son.

[26 : 24] Jesus and the Holy Spirit are as equally holy as God. God and the Holy Spirit are as equally loving as Jesus, and God and the Son are as equally wise as the Holy Spirit.

So that is the third fact, that the attributes of God are found equally in the Trinity. The fourth fact that I want to present to you is that all the attributes of God are permanent of God.

The attributes of God, the truths about God, are permanent of God. The reality is each attribute has always been eternally part of God.

God did not grow and learn certain attributes, and certain attributes didn't fall away from God. This is part of God being unchangeable.

He does not change. Now, why is this important? Well, it's important when we think about that God is equally loving in the Old Testament as he is in the New Testament.

[27 : 32] Anyone who says otherwise doesn't understand the attributes of God in his unchanging nature. God is equally wrathful in the New Testament as he is in the Old Testament.

There's no diminishing, there's no increasing. If there were, he would no longer be God. God is not in God. We understand that any attribute of God are permanent of God for all time.

Number five, all of God's attributes are inseparably connected. All of God's attributes are inseparably connected.

And what I mean by this is God doesn't peel off a certain attribute of himself when he's displaying another attribute of himself.

As an example, in God's love, he is perfectly holy. In God's mercy, he's perfectly holy.

[28 : 41] In his power, he's perfectly holy. In God's righteousness, he is perfectly holy. You see, there is no division within God.

First, we differentiate between the attributes of God, but we cannot speak of any attribute of God in isolation of the other.

And this is the last fact about God. God, I believe it's still continuing on this idea that theologians call God a simple being.

We obviously know he's not simple, but what they mean by this is that he is not divisible. You cannot take certain parts of him.

As an example, some of you guys know Breton has this recipe for bread, and she shares it. We take two tablespoons of salt, five cups of yeast, eight cups of butter, and I think 12 pounds of sugar.

[29 : 52] We put it all in, and the reality is it's not like we can take, all right, you know what, I'm not going to put the sugar in, I'm going to take it out. I'm going to put less yeast.

God's not like that. Everything is all God all the time. Do we understand this? This is something we have to understand.

He's not one part holy, two parts loving, and three parts justice. He is just, he is loving, he is holy, he is loving, he is everything together.

The reality is if we could take away any of the Lord's attributes, he would no longer be God. Practically speaking, this means that our creator does not, indeed, he cannot set aside any of his attributes.

Therefore, God's love does not compromise his holiness. Instead, it is a holy love, a just love, an eternal love.

[31 : 16] God's justice is a holy justice, a loving justice, an omnipotent justice, meaning an powerful justice.

Think about his work on the cross. This is the perfect example. God does not show mercy at the expense of his justice.

You and I, as sinners, are granted forgiveness. He forgives us, but he cannot set aside his holiness. He cannot set aside his justice.

justice. That's why Jesus Christ goes to the cross to satisfy God's justice, God's wrath, which we rightfully deserve.

And by doing so, he's all of God always at all times. In forgiving us, he exercises a merciful justice.

[32 : 19] grace. And he executes his just wrath for our sin on his son, so that you and I receive mercy and forgiveness.

So God is not divisible. So in conclusion, I want to give you six reasons why I want us to study God. Six reasons. If there's some reason you think, you know what, I already kind of got God, I love God, you know, I'm hoping that I can convince you that you not only want to learn these things, that you want to look forward to these things.

You want to look forward to knowing these truths, to learning these truths, and to one day be able to teach these truths. I know you might think, hey, God loves me.

Do I really need to be a theologian? Do I need to understand what these different words mean?

Well, let me give you six reasons. One, worship.

[33 : 33] The better our love and understanding of God is, the higher our worship of God is. The higher our worship of our God word is.

one of my professors cannot say the word worship. The word that he always has to say is transcendent worship.

Transcendent worship. He says this because he knows that worship must go beyond the ordinary. It must surpass the ordinary. It must exceed the ordinary.

He says that our worship as believers in Christ should be. These are his words, and I love it. Our worship should be eye-popping, jaw-dropping, amazing, mind-expanding, heart-rending, knee-bending, life-giving.

Worship that is described as anything less is not the worship of a true God. God. And the only type, the only way this can happen is if we have a high view of God.

[34 : 42] Maybe you are bored with worship. Maybe you're tired of worship. Maybe you've experienced or are experiencing dry worship, worship, perhaps even uninspired worship.

The reality is there is a cure. That cure is God and God alone. If you have any question about worship of God, I will give you the same advice and counsel.

Get to know God. You see, theology, our understanding, has to drive our worship. Theologians call this doxology.

It is our form of praise to God. Greater knowledge of God leads to greater worship of God. Did you know that you and I were created to worship?

That God created us to worship Him. worship is defined as a heart that is fully surrendered and absolutely blown away by God.

[35 : 59] That is worship. So the first reason is worship. The second reason is a desire for holy living, or I'm sorry, humble living. The reality is if you struggle with pride, study God and you will be crushed.

Pride in yourself will be absolutely set aside in the study of God. You see, when we see God high and lifted up, we will see ourselves in the light of God.

And guess what? We're not blown away by how great we are. You see, when we know God, we understand that we can do very little.

And when we know we can do very little, we know where we fit into this world, it drives us to prayer. I don't know if you remember, but when most, if not all, homes have HDTVs.

I don't know if you remember that when these HDTVs came out, the Actors Guild were actually complaining against them because we were now able to see blemishes on movie screen and TV actors that we weren't able to see before because the TVs were so clear.

[37 : 21] That's what studying God does to us. As God becomes clear, so do we. When we move closer to God, we see ourselves more clearly for who we are.

We will see our sins, we will see our limitations, and we will see our weaknesses. As I said before, this should drive us to our knees and call out for God's grace in mercy.

The third reason we want to study God is spiritual maturity. It's spiritual maturity. The more we grow in the knowledge of God, the more we mature in our spiritual walk.

the knowledge of God produces godliness. The more I know God, the more I become like him.

We've just been studying that in Ephesians. We're talking about how we are to imitate both his love and to demonstrate his forgiveness.

As we grow in the knowledge of him, it is easier for us to love and it's easier for us to forgive. When I think about the world a lot, guess what?

[38 : 39] I begin to act like the world. I've got a good friend, he comes from Northern Ireland and when I grew up, my mom could always tell when I was hanging out with him because I'd come back with a little bit of an Irish lilt.

I would start talking like him. It's the same thing spiritually. The more time we spend with God, he will break us and grow us, mold us into the type of man and woman that he calls us to be.

I think if you have a low view of God, your bar for spiritual growth will be pretty low. See, you cannot grow higher than what you know.

If you have a high view of God and a high view of who he is in worship, you will grow. The fourth reason you want to study God and his attributes is effective ministry.

The result will be the more you know God, the more you want to obey, which will result in serving God. You will want to tell others, you want to teach others, you want to witness to others. The more we know and understand God, he gets a bigger and bigger place in our heart.

[39 : 57] two more truths. The fifth truth is personal encouragement. Personal encouragement. You know what knowing God does?

It brings us encouragement and comfort. Encouragement and comfort. The great English preacher C.H. Spurgeon said that when trials came his way, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which you lay your head upon.

See, the more we know God, the more we can trust God. Like our marriages are strengthened over time, as trust builds and grow, it's the exact same with God.

In his book called Trusting God, written by Jerry Bridges, he identifies three attributes of God that if any believer can understand, they will be able to withstand any trial of life.

Are you ready? I'm going to tell you what they are. One, God is sovereign over all circumstances. God is sovereign over all circumstances.

[41 : 11] So he states that understanding God's love, God's wisdom, and God's sovereignty is all that one needs. So one, God is sovereign over all circumstances.

Two, God deeply loves me. So I know that whatever's going on around, God is sovereign. Two, I know that God loves me.

And three, God is wise enough to cause all things for my goodness and his glory. And that's what gives us peace.

peace. If you don't believe that God is sovereign over all these things that we see today, then you have every right to live in fear.

You have every right to be anxious. If you do not believe that God does not love you, it is totally rational for you to wonder if there's a purpose in there because there might not be a purpose for you.

[42 : 19] But if you know and understand God's love, his wisdom, and sovereignty, there's not much for you to fear.

And finally, the sixth reason why we're going to do this study, and I pray that you'll want to join us more, is personal conversion. The knowledge of God is the first step into the kingdom of God.

To actually be saved is to know something of God, isn't it? You might know theology, but to become a Christian, you must know something of God's holiness.

To understand something of God's holiness, I have to understand something of my sin. If I understand something of God's love and mercy, I understand this cross. And because I understand God's love, what he has for me, I know something of God's grace. I also know the wrath that is to come.

[43 : 33] And I know God didn't come to save me from loneliness. I know God did not come to save me from my low self-esteem. but that ultimately God came to save me from his wrath.

Those are the six reasons why we're going to study this subject. Before I go, I want to tell you about three false forms of God knowers.

I call these three false forms of God knowers. The first person is the I know God from other persons. That's someone who might read a lot of books, listen to a lot of sermons, or have Christian parents or grandparents, and they heard about God, they hear through hearsay, they hear about others' experiences, but they do not have that experience of knowing God.

You see, knowing about God is not substituting for walking with God in a personal relationship.

Having positive thoughts about God does not mean I am walking with God.

All right? The second person is I love the Bible person. This is the one that I love everything about the Bible. I love it. I would give up my life to defend its truth.

[44 : 51] I believe the Ten Commandments should be in every courthouse. I believe that the Lord's prayer should be put into every school. Bible. But affirming these incredible truths of the Bible are not the same as actually living out the truths in the Bible.

It doesn't mean that I know the Bible. No matter how positively and strongly and affirming I might be of this being God's word that sits by my bed every day and night.

It's not a substitute for knowing God. Then there's the last person. It's the I love God's truth person. It's the person who believes God is in control of all things but is paralyzed by anxiety and fear. It means they might believe all the right attributes of God but they do not impart that knowledge into their everyday life.

Yes I believe in God's holiness yet I sin whenever and however I want. You see the I know God from others I love the Bible or I love truth are no substitutes for knowing God.

[46 : 30] Today I just want to ask you a simple question. Where do you want God to take you? What do you want God to reveal himself about him to you?

Is there an area that you know God has to get into? He's got to squeeze something out of your life? Is God perhaps building on something into your life?

I don't know only you can answer that. But my prayer for you right now and I pray that you will pray with me is that you will simply ask the question and commit to knowing him and saying God take me where you want me to go so that I might know you more.

Dear Lord Heavenly Father I just pray as we come before you that you would prepare our hearts to a deeper and more knowledgeable understanding of who you are both through your attributes and through the practical applications of these truths in our lives.

Father I pray that you would bring clarity to my voice that you would bring power through the Holy Spirit in each of the lives that are hearing this message.

[47 : 56] Father we want your name to be lifted up your name to be glorified. We can only do that if we know you to walk with you. Father I pray that it would be the sincere desire of every person in our church church.

To follow the words of Jeremiah. That we would be able to boast on knowing God.

how amazing it would be to hear someone say that of us. I know that person and if there's one thing I know about them they know God.

So Father I pray that you would discard any evil thought and any lie of the enemy. May you allow us to carve out the time in order to know more of you.

May you confront us with your word both spoken and read through the silent power of your spirit as we come to your word may it convict and may we cut out those areas that need to be thrown away that cause us to be perceived as walking more in the world than in the word.

[49 : 29] May we be knowers of walking with you rather than the world. So Father on this Sunday morning pray that you continue to minister to us together even though we are individually apart.

We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen.