

# Growing in Our Shared Faith



Note on the overflow room

Not an ideal situation but allows for us to get as many of our people back together as possible.

# He Is Beyond Our Greatest Thoughts!

**Exodus 3:13-14; John 4:23-24; Ps.  
18:30-32; 102:24-27**

There was a show I watched as a kid called, “He-man and the Masters of the Universe.” Little boys wanted to be like this great powerful man who was able to beat the bad guy that has a skeleton face that looked like death. And without any reference to God, He-man was depicted as being morally good and upright. He also had the power within himself to overcome evil if he only had the right key, which was a sword and the right mindset and password.

A couple of weeks ago, Paul started his sermon on grace with Rom. 3:10–18. In that passage, Paul the Apostle counters man’s confidence in his own moral goodness by speaking to the sinful depravity of humanity. He compiles parts of some Psalms and Isaiah and starts:

There is no one righteous, not even one.

11 There is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.

12 All have turned away;  
all alike have become worthless.

There is no one who does what is good,  
not even one.

Those verses come from Psalm 14. Psalm 14 begins with this bold statement, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

People in their sin have assumed that they are the masters of the universe, just like the title of that cartoon. They cannot see God, the true Master of the Universe, but they can see themselves. They do not comprehend the nature of God’s power on display nor the judgment that His power indicates. It is not that God has not revealed Himself. Nor is it that God is unknowable. He has both revealed Himself and is knowable. It is that man is so easily pleased with himself. People put on their He-man pajamas, grab their electronic sticks, and cry out I am He-man, or any other combination of pronouns.

Because a child can throw a pebble, he considers himself strong and the winner of a contest in which he is the only competitor. So also people think they are autonomous and self-determining for their reality, as long as no has sought to cancel them.

There was a church leader named Anselm from over a thousand years ago that spoke to this foolishness. Even the fool, he said, must acknowledge certain logical claims about God. An unbeliever may not believe in the one true God, but he can understand the concept of a god. And if the unbeliever can acknowledge the Christian understanding that God is greater than our greatest thoughts, then even the fool is implicitly acknowledging God's existence. Because logically speaking, it is better for the greatest possible being to exist than to not exist. Part of being the greatest possible being is existing, therefore, he must exist.

Now, this battle of wits that Anselm began has frustrated non-believers ever since he penned it, arguing against it. But let me help you understand something, Anselm wasn't saying we start with logic to get to faith. Anselm wasn't writing to non-Christians. He was writing to the church to encourage devotion to the True Master of the Universe.

You are not a great fool if your starting point to life is faith in the unseen God who is Master over all, for if you start by faith, then God will illuminate your mind to understand Him according to the gospel. In believing and then understanding, you will line your life up with the Creator in worship of Him.

Our God is beyond even our greatest thoughts!

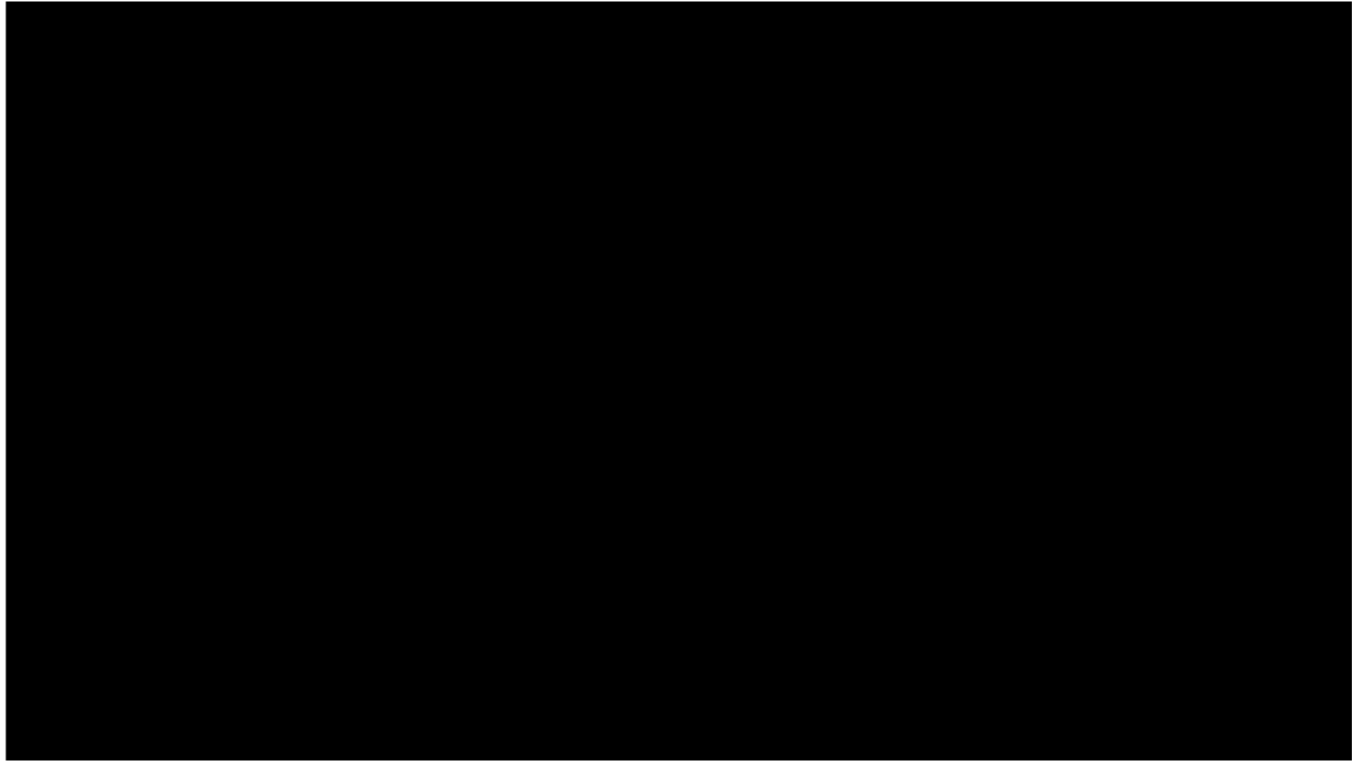
Today's sermon is the first half of a 2-part sermon on God being beyond us and yet near and with us.

As the BFM 2000 reads:

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections.

Our God is Beyond Even our Greatest Thoughts!

Let's pray and then look at some passages that speak to God's self-existence, his infinitude, and perfection.



Prayer

## **Exodus 3:13-14**

**13 Then Moses asked God, “If I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what should I tell them?”**

First, let's look at Exodus 3:13-14

**14 God replied to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you.”**

# **The God Who Is will be with us, His people, through everything to which He calls us.**

## Explanation:

God declares His name as YHWH. He had revealed his name as YHWH since Genesis 2. This is not his first pronunciation of that name. John Sailhammer points out that When Moses asks, about the name of the God sending him back to Egypt, Moses is not asking to make sure he says the right name. He is asking about what kind of character God has so that Moses can be confident in what he is supposed to do.

YHWH is the God who is, and He is the One who initiated and upheld His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was going to keep His promise and see the Israelites through the storm of oppression and deliver them by His display of power. The Israelites still had in their background that God had promised to bring them back from Egypt to the land of promise. So Moses isn't asking for the right combination of syllables. Moses is asking about why he should be confident this God can deliver people through their greatest difficulties.

Application: There is only one true God. As we said last week, there are only two categories: The Creator and the creation. All creatures are dependent on God. He is NOT dependent on anyone of anything. The Triune God exists within Himself. We exist only as He graciously gives us existence. So when Moses asks, who will I say is sending me? God says, "I Am the One Who Is."

I can't even make myself breathe consistently. Breathing is an involuntary exercise we do, but I even mess that up sometimes. Ever since I was a kid, I stop breathing appropriately when I think about how to breathe. I start thinking about it too much. And then by trying harder to breathe normally, I get irregular in my breathing. And That is just my responsible part in the process. There are so many aspects to my existence that are out of my control. I am dependent on all kinds of factors to exist, and all of these factors are dependent on the God who is, the God who has created, sustains, and rules over the creation.

When God tells Moses that He is the God Who Is, he's not just telling Him about His self-existence. He is also reassuring Moses He will be with him and nothing can

withstand His will.

Egypt was the superpower, the Israelites were the oppressed. Pharaoh was heralded as god-like and the people were his servants. The powers that the Egyptians looked to were idols whose powers were limited to certain categories. God is saying, “Change your perspective about your entire situation. I, and I alone, and the One Who Is.” He promised to bring the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into the Promised Land. As He was sending Moses back to Egypt to be His representative. YHWH would walk before and with Moses all the way through the life to which He had called Moses.

\*\*\*The One Who Is—the God who exists within Himself—is the God who will be with us, His people, through all which He calls us.

We are used to thinking that maybe those who depend on us will have to stay with us, because, well, they depend on us. Those who don't need us may come and they may go. So we want to make ourselves great and seem like others need us so that they want to stay with us. But the God Who Is, The One Who Was, Who Is, and Who Will Always Be, The True Master of the Universe does not need us, yet He has promised to see us through all the journey to which He has called us.

Ohhh...the God Who Is , is beyond our greatest thoughts!

We have seen that God, the intentional and intelligent Creator speaks and reveals Himself by His Word. We have also spoken to how the Creator is distinct from the creature. One of the ways that we note this distinction is that Jesus states that God is spirit.



**John 4:23–24**

**23 But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him.**

**24 God is spirit, and those who  
worship him must worship in  
Spirit and in truth.**

**God is not limited by space and time, nor by people's perceptions and attempts at control.**

Explanation:

The first two commandment listed in the Ten Commandments reveal truth about God and about us.

First, there is no other God, and he demands complete allegiance.

Second, He is spirit, and we should not make idol out of anything.

We are not to shape God in the image of creation, as if that is somehow worship to Him. He rejects idolatry as evil.

But these commands also reveal the sinfulness of mankind. People are quick to reassign their commitments based on their circumstances. And people in their sinfulness try to grasp for control, control over God, if that were somehow possible, and control over other people.

Application:

\*\*\*God is not limited by space and time, nor by people's perceptions and attempts at control.\*\*\*

The True Master of the Universe is Spirit and is calling to Himself true worshippers, who worship in Spirit and Truth. The context for this statement is a woman who had been subjected to the controlling desires of different men and subjected to the judgment of the other women. In noting the particulars of Jewish religious practices and Samaritan religious practices, she focused on the control of these cultural expectations. She was speaking as if God were limited by people in the same way that she had experienced. She had been pigeonholed into a societal role. The two religious backgrounds that were represented surely had control over where God was to be worshipped. Wrong.

God is not limited by space and time, nor by people's perceptions and attempts at control.

The Spirit of God is the One who gives life as the gospel is proclaimed, and this True Master of the Universe is not isolated to a particular building, region, or nation. His worshippers will fill the world, and the world will not be able to control them. For even if the world kills the body, they cannot kill the soul. And the Spirit of God will continue to blow where He wills in order to bring glory to the Father by exalting the Son.

This God is amazing. We are designed in a way that we are able to recognize His worthiness, even though we will never fully appreciate His worth.

The God who does not depend on anyone else for existence, the God who is present with us in any and every situation to which He sends us, and Who is not limited in any way, including people's perceptions and attempts at control, He is infinitely perfect in every way.

**Psalm 18:30–32**

**30 God—his way is perfect;  
the word of the Lord is pure.  
He is a shield to all who take  
refuge in him.**

**31 For who is God besides the  
Lord?**

**And who is a rock? Only our  
God.**

**32 God—he clothes me with  
strength  
and makes my way perfect.**

**The infinitely desirable and holy  
God has made His dwelling with  
the recognized weak of the  
world, the church.**

Explanation:

We often misrepresent the idea of perfection when we talk about it.

When I say the word perfect, your mind may immediately go to the matter of moral incorruption. So you may want to say that Adam and Eve were perfect before they sinned. But that way of understanding perfection starts with our fallen perspective. Yes, perfection has moral aspects to its definition, but it also carries with it the concept of wholeness, of complete beauty, of that which is most desirable. When we look at the handiwork of one of the world's greatest artists or the craftsmanship of a master architect, we are expressing our longing to view that which is complete, that which is perfect.

But we walk away from even the greatest human masterpieces, because they are not the infinitely perfect One. We long for the absolute beauty of God that reminds us we are creatures made to exult in Him.

One way we describe God in this way is infinite holiness. God is infinitely vast; there is no end to him; yet He is pure and simple, for there is no contradiction to Him. He is absolutely joyful and loving yet absolutely righteous. He is everything we desire. Now, now...now, let's deal with the matter of our moral aspect perfection. We are sinners who rightly deserve death at the hands of this Infinitely holy God, the one we should desire.

For those who have placed their faith in His covenant promises, which have been accomplished by Christ Jesus, we are now in the process of being transformed by God more and more into the image of Christ. Instead of judging us in our sin, the Perfect One begins the work of conforming us to His image. This gift is only for those who have placed their faith in Christ, those the World seem ready to reject.

Application: \*\*\*The Infinitely desirable and holy God has made His dwelling with the recognized weak of the world, the church.\*\*\*

We live in a time in which everyone online has access to everyone else online. Instead of fostering community, social media tends to encourage self-exaltation and division, with only a pseudo-connection to others. Now a mob can gather strength in order judge someone without ever gathering in person.

The irony of cancel culture, or call-out culture, is that everyone should be called out. No one has the right to hold a stone if the requirement is perfection, no one except God, and the Son of God took the stoning for us, took the crucifixion for us.

1 Corinthians calls out the arrogance of people in this world who want to present themselves as perfect. They want to see themselves as strong, as wise, as right, as capable, all because they say so about themselves. It sounds like the epitome of social media. But we are called out as the weak of the world, the foolish of the world.

1 Cor 1:23-25

we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. 24 Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, 25 because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

16 Don't you, [church] know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

\*\*\*The Infinitely desirable and holy God has made His dwelling with the recognized weak of the world, the church.\*\*\*

This hope that we have with God is not limited to our years before death but is guaranteed to be everlasting according to God's eternal existence.

This True Master of the Universe, the One True God, who is Beyond even our Greatest Thoughts is eternal. He is sovereign over time and history.



**Psalm 102:24b–27**

**Your years continue through all  
generations.**

**25 Long ago you established the  
earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your  
hands.**

**26 They will perish, but you will  
endure;  
all of them will wear out like  
clothing.  
You will change them like a garment,  
and they will pass away.**

**27 But you are the same,  
and your years will never end.**

**The eternal God has already mapped out all of time and history to show Christ Jesus as preeminent.**

In foolishness, men have tried to box God into their preferences.

The idols that men have created, they have thrust heavenward to declare better than all other people's gods. But their idols go in the way of those who made them.

Psalm 102 records the psalmist's recognition that people are temporary. We are constrained by time. There is a beginning to our existence. Apart from God, we die. And so those idols, which we create and try to sustain, are shown to be foolishly made in our image. They wither away and are destroyed.

But there is another type of idol that Western people try to raise up. Instead of holding up a carved image, we declare to the world our own great autonomy and rule over the world. But no matter how meteoric one's rise to power is, it is short-lived.

Because of sin, our life on this sin-corrupted earth is brief.

We are like grass that is here today and gone tomorrow. You may have noticed that plants are coming back from dormancy. Buds are budding and blades of grass are sprouting. It is often associated with a metaphor for new life. But this new grass and its growth on lawns will lead to lawn mowers. And so the blade of grass that starts in the early spring will be cut by the blade of the mower in mid-spring. And a new blade will rise up, but it too will be cut short. Our lives are limited. Even the longest-living of us only lives to about 120 years. Even if we know factual knowledge about thousands of years prior or can predict major events in the near future, we are still limited to a short life.

But

\*\*\*The Eternal God has already mapped out all of time and history to show Christ Jesus as preeminent.\*\*\*

The True Master over the Universe, who is Beyond even our greatest thoughts, planned out the beginning and the end, and everything in-between. That which began in Genesis 1 will have an end. But God, who is without beginning and without end, has promised to bring about a new version of creation, filled with those people who have come to know Him by faith in Christ Jesus. He who is the Alpha and the Omega has made this Great God known within time, revealing that God is near to us.

And if you have placed your faith in Christ, this Master of the Universe, this self-existent Spirit, who will walk with us in this life, this One unlimited by people's judgments and attempts at control, this infinitely holy God who is sovereign over all time, has made a covenant promise to you.

I will be with you, and I will never ever leave, and I will never ever let you go.

The world may foolishly raise their swords, making boastful claims of their own power, and call us fools.

But by faith, I'd rather be called a fool by the world than to be called a fool by the True Master of the Universe. Unlike the foolish of the world, let's boast in our weakness, so that we may delight in God's strength and perfection.