

# **“God Is . . . Omnipresent”**

## **Part 3 - Text: Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-12**

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on April 22, 2018

### **INTRODUCTION**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** One of the defining marks of our culture is being true to yourself. The message we hear is, **“Discover who you are. Learn what makes you unique. Know yourself, be yourself, and love yourself.”**
  - Christianity also places a great deal of emphasis on knowing who you are but it says you must do this in relation to God. Listen to this quote by John Calvin: **(SHOW SLIDE 2) “Man never attains a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God and come down after such contemplation to look into himself.”**<sup>1</sup>
    - So if you want to know the fullness of who you are, and what it means to be a human being, you don’t begin by looking inward. You begin by looking at God for God created you. Once you know who your Creator is then you can understand who he created you to be.
- In order to help us know who God is, we are doing a 7-part series on the attributes of God. God’s attributes describe what he is like. Today we are going to look at one more incommunicable attribute. Remember an incommunicable attribute is something that is unique to God. For instance, God is eternal. We’re not like
  - For the sake of simplicity I will simply follow the same outline as the first two messages.
    - First, we will define God’s omnipresence. Second, we will demonstrate where it is found in scripture. And finally we will draw out two implications from this attribute.

### **DEFINING GOD’S OMNIPRESENCE**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** Let’s begin then by **defining God’s omnipresence**. The Latin word ‘omni’ means ‘all’. So when you attach ‘omni’ to the word ‘presence’ what do you think omnipresence means? **(SHOW SLIDE 4) Omnipresence literally means ‘all-present.’** So God is present everywhere.
  - Wayne Grudem fills out that definition a bit more when he writes: **(SHOW SLIDE 5) “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being, yet God acts differently in different places.”**<sup>2</sup>
    - We will unpack this definition in a moment but right now let your soul rise to worship God. Last week we worshipped as we saw that God is not limited by time. This week let your heart worship because God is not limited by space. Last week we dealt with the child’s question, **“when God**

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christians Religion*, Book I.I.2.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 173.

**was born?”** This week we deal with the child’s question of **“where is God?”**

- Let your soul rise to worship for God is everywhere and that means we are always in God’s presence.
  - We always live *Coram Deo* – before the face of God.

## **PSALM 139 AND GOD’S OMNIPRESENCE**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 6)** Having defined God’s omnipresence, let’s now **demonstrate the three parts of the definition from scripture.**
  - **(SHOW SLIDE 7)** First, let me show you that **God is present at every point of space with his whole being.**
- That God is present in every point of space is most beautifully expressed in the eloquent words of David in Psalm 139:7-12. Turn there with me. Here David exalts God as he considers the fact that there is nowhere he can go that would take him from God’s presence. **READ 7 - *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?*** David considers three possible ways he could escape God’s presence.
  - The first one is in verse 8. **READ 8 - *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!***
    - If he went up to heaven God would be there. Or if he did the opposite and went down to the depths, which is a reference to the abode of the dead, God would be there also.
  - Since it is impossible to escape God’s presence by going up or down he now considers going east and west. **READ 9-10 - *9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.***
    - In other words, **“if I could ride the sun like a bird from it’s rising in the far east and let it carry me to the farthest point in the west I would still be in your presence.”**
      - Since God is present in the far north, the far south, the far east and the far west, it means he is present everywhere in between as well.
  - But David considers one more place he could escape from God’s presence. **READ 11-12 - *11 If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.***
    - If he should try and hide from God in the darkness he would discover that God’s eye pierces through the blackness since to God darkness is as light.
- In Jeremiah 23 God goes even further saying, **23 “Am I a God at hand, declares the LORD, and not a God far away? 24 Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.**

## **THE VASTNESS OF SPACE AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

- With our knowledge of the vastness of space we should be even more awestruck than David by how God can be present at every point in space.

- If you were to travel at 100mph from Los Angeles to New York it would take you 31 hours to cover that distance. If you were to travel 100mph into space it would take you 14 weeks to cover the distance to the moon. Now consider how vast our solar system is. **(SHOW SLIDE 8)** Here is a picture that represents the distance between the planets. Earth is so small you can hardly see it. Now, if you travelled at 100mph from Earth to the last planet called Neptune, how long do you think it would take to cover that distance? It would take you 3100 years.
  - So if you left earth when Jesus was born you would still have over a thousands years to go in order to cover that much space. And yet despite the distance God is present at every point of that space. But let's go bigger.
- Here is a picture of our Milky Way Galaxy. **(SHOW SLIDE 9)** The Milky Way is so large that it contains between 200 and 400 billion stars. Our sun and the entire solar system is not even visible at this point. So if it would take you 3100 years to get to Neptune how long would it take to make one orbit of the Milky Way?
  - Well, our suns travels at 800,000km/h and orbits around the centre of the Galaxy. But even at that speed, the sun, and therefore the Earth, will take 225 million years to make one orbit of the galaxy.
    - And despite the vastness of all this space God is present at every single point with His whole being.
- Let's go one level further. In the 1990's the Hubble Space Telescope was focused on a tiny section of the sky. **(SHOW SLIDE 10)** As you can see in this picture the space was about 1/10<sup>th</sup> the size of a full moon. To the naked eye that is a section of the sky with no stars. It seemed to be empty space with no galaxies, no stars, no gases or matter of any kind. Thinking they would be able to see further than ever before because of the unobstructed view they focused the telescope on that one spot for 10 days.
  - When they developed the pictures they were shocked. Here is what they saw. **(SHOW SLIDE 11)**. The little smudges of light you are looking at are not single stars. Every smudge of light is an entire galaxy. In this photo alone there are at least 1500 galaxies.
    - Now try to comprehend if you can how much space this is. If our Galaxy is so big that it takes us 225 million years to make one orbit, how long would it take to cross the distance between two of these galaxies? Now are you ready to have your brain crack? Hubble has now found 80 billion galaxies and they are just getting started on mapping the universe.
- God is present at every point of space with all his being. I cannot go on. I am awestruck. I am dumbfounded. We're not like that. My presence is so localized. I can only exist in one location at a time. I am so limited that I do not even know what is going on in the nursery right now let alone what is happening on Neptune. And yet God is as fully present in this room as He is in the more than 80 billion galaxies. All of God is present there. All of God is present in this room.

- It is not wonder that David wrote in Psalm 8, ***“Oh Yahweh, our Lord, when I consider the heavens and the works of thy hands what is man that you should care for him?”***
  - Worship this God who in the first place then is present at every point of space with his whole being.

## **GOD DOES NOT HAVE SIZE OR SPATIAL DIMENSIONS**

- It is not enough to simply say that God is present at every point of space with his whole being. We need in the second place to add that **(SHOW SLIDE 12). God does not have size or spatial dimensions.**
  - In other words God is not and cannot be contained by space. As big as the universe is, God’s presence is not confined by it. In 1 Kings chapter 8 Solomon prays a prayer for dedication for the newly built temple. God promised that his presence would dwell in the temple. But Solomon then prays these words:
    - **(SHOW SLIDE 13) READ 27 - *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!***
  - Despite the immense size of the universe God is not confined by it. He is distinct from it.
- This guards us from one of the dominant spiritual viewpoints of Westcoast people, which is pantheism. You learned some Latin in the word ‘omnipresence’. Now we learn some Greek.
  - The word ‘pan’ means ‘all.’ So for instance the Pan American Games that are held every four years include athletes from all the Americas, both North America and South America. It is the All American Games.
    - ‘Theism’ means ‘god.’ So pantheism literally means ‘all god’. Pantheism is the belief that all is God and God is all.
- It is believed then that the divine presence flows through all living things from trees to tigers to toddlers. Since the divine is in you, you also are god. In Star Wars it is the force. In Avatar is it he goddess Eywa.
  - The Christian agrees that God’s presence is everywhere but because he cannot be contained by space He is distinct from it. God is not a tree or a rock. He created them but He is distinct from them.
    - So as immense as God is even the universe cannot contain Him.

## **GOD IS PRESENT IN DIFFERENT WAYS**

- The third thing we want to say as we demonstrate God’s omnipresence from scripture is that although God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point in space, **(SHOW SLIDE 14) God acts differently in different places.** Although he is present everywhere he manifests his presence in different ways. Let me mention three different ways the Bible talks about this.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 15) First of all God is present to bless.**

- David says in Psalm 16:11, **“you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”** Or II Corinthians 3:17 says, **“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”** Or consider the staggering statement of Jesus in John 14:23: **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** And this is the great message of Pentecost, that the Spirit of God dwells in the believer.
  - In fact, almost every time the Bible talks about God’s presence it is referring to how God’s presence is a blessing.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 16) Second, God is present to sustain.**
  - His very presence keeps the universe going. As Hebrews 1 says of Jesus: **“The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”**
- God is present to bless, present to sustain, and finally **(SHOW SLIDE 17) God is present to judge those who continue in rebellion against Him.** Amos 9 describes the wicked trying to escape God but speaking of his omnipresence God says,
  - **“Not one will get away, none will escape. Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down. Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them.”**
    - This raises a big question. If God is omnipresent is he present in hell? The popular idea is that hell, by very definition, is the absence of God. But the Bible teaches the opposite. The Bible teaches that the worst thing about hell is that God is ever present but not present to bless, present to judge.
- In Revelation 14 we read of those who worship the beast that they, **“will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”**
  - Author, Michael Horton, writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 18) “Hell is not ultimately about fire but about God. Whatever the exact nature of the physical punishments, the real terror awaiting the unrepentant is God himself and his inescapable presence forever with his face turned against them.”**<sup>3</sup>

## **IMPLICATION #1 – A STERN WARNING**

- This leads us straight into the third part of the message. We have defined God’s omnipresence and demonstrated it from scripture. Now finally we will draw out two implications. **(SHOW SLIDE 19) Implication #1: God’s omnipresence is a stern warning to the non-Christian.**
  - It is a stern warning because one day you will be summoned to stand before your Maker to give an account for your life. Though you may hide your secret sins from other people, though you may disguise your false motives before others, you need to know that because God is omnipresent, **“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.”**

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Horton, *Modern Reformation Magazine*, Vol 11, Num 3, May/June 2002, 19.

- My soul trembles to think of that day. What will it be like when God shows people their guilt, when he shows them that they have rejected Jesus and his offer of salvation? What can be done in that moment? Where will you run? Where can you flee that you could escape the judgment of God? In what corner of the universe can you hide?
- Revelation 6 describes the coming of Jesus to judge. We read that as he descends in glory and power, ***“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’”*** Where can you flee when God is present at every point of space?
  - Dear friends, God’s omnipresence is a stern warning to be reconciled with this God this very day that you might never face his wrath. The good news of the Bible is that Jesus bore the wrath that sinners deserve in his body on the cross, that we might be rescued. Jesus is the rescuer but he will only rescue those who admit their need to be rescued and trust in Him to rescue.
    - This very moment cry out to Jesus and say, ***“I am guilty. I have sinned in motive and action. I believe that because you died and rose again you can rescue me. Save me this very moment.”***

## **IMPLICATION #2 – A GREAT ASSURANCE**

- **(SHOW SLIDE 20) Implication #2: God’s omnipresence is a great assurance to the Christian.** The Christian knows that the omnipresent God took on human flesh in Jesus in order to rescue us and restores us back to Himself.
  - But even more than that on this Pentecost Sunday we learn that the omnipresent God has chosen to manifest his presence in us by His Spirit. This glorious God comes to dwell in us by the Holy Spirit. This brings great assurance to the soul.
- **(SHOW SLIDE 21) God’s omnipresence is a great assurance in our relationship with God.**
  - The Christian will never be rejected by God or face judgment because Jesus paid it all at the cross.
    - And so we shout with assurance, ***“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***
- **(SHOW SLIDE 22) God’s omnipresence is a great assurance in life’s troubles.**
  - ***“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”*** Why not? Why can the Christian walk through the darkest times in life and have no fear? ***“For you are with me.”*** Dear Christian whatever you are facing today know that because God is omnipresent He is with you. We are never

beyond God's help for just as he was present with Joseph in prison, with Daniel in the lion's den, so He is with all His children.

- Psalm 46:1 says, "**God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.**" A.W. Tozer writes, "**The knowledge that we are never alone calms the troubled sea of our lives and speaks peace to our souls.**"<sup>4</sup>

➤ **(SHOW SLIDE 23) God's omnipresence is a great assurance in prayer.**

- Do you remember when the King asked Nehemiah, his cupbearer, why he was sad? Nehemiah was afraid to tell the king his heart because it might show disloyalty. But he explains that the city of Jerusalem lies in ruins. Then the king then asks, "**What is it you want?**"
  - And then Nehemiah 2:4 says, "**Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king.**" Nehemiah silently said a quick prayer and then silently answered. Friends, because God is omnipresent you can pray to him anywhere and anytime. Pray before you go into a meeting. Pray when you are having trouble with the kids. Pray when you have a job interview. He is omnipresent.

➤ **(SHOW SLIDE 24) Finally, God's omnipresence is a great assurance in evangelism.**

- Do you fear to open your mouth and speak about Jesus? Do you fear that you will not know what to say? Jesus knew this and so after he commanded to tell the world about him he gave this great promise: "**and surely I am with you till the very end of the age.**"
  - Step out in boldness and courage and talk to others about Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

- God is omnipresent. Let us worship what we cannot fathom. Let us humble ourselves before Him. Let us receive the grace of God to us in Jesus that we might enjoy an eternity dwelling forever in his presence.

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<sup>4</sup> A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, pg 82.