

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

November 5, 2023. "What do we talk about when we talk about God? Humility."

I Intro.

All the holidays are right around the corner. Things are running at full speed and we want you to be a part of this great community. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

Okay...here we go. I'm not even sure where to begin with this new series. Let me give you a little 'where this is coming from' that will hopefully give it some context. One, many of us use personal phrases and terms to describe our relationship with God. Maybe they're from past experiences and how God has been there for us. Maybe we picked them up from family or a previous church life. However, when we use them, it's like using a southern phrase to a northerner. It just doesn't make any sense to them, and it doesn't connect. It means something to you, it's real. But it's strictly personal to you. Two, we all will admit God is infinite and beyond our understanding. And to think all of who God is can be captured in our words, or even that our words can be who God is, is really an exercise in futility. Third, if we're honest...I mean really honest. Sometimes we struggle to even understand for ourselves what our words about God mean. They've become symbols of who God is for us, some important event in our past. But we don't have words to explain our words.

The final thing is we want each of us to be able to explain to another person, believer or not, what we mean when we talk about God. And to be able to speak to others about God in such a way that they can understand it...it makes sense. That doesn't mean they'll agree. But they understand. We've come to the place where we believe that it's only true, and deep, if you can't understand it. And I'm as guilty as anyone residing in that place of making God be more complicated than needed.

The goal of this three Sunday series is simply to help us flesh out who we think God is. To find accurate and simple words to explain that. And for others to be able to find a connection (see why we did connection last month) with God.

So, we start with a few questions.

Who is God to you? How have you experienced him?

If you were to explain who God is, what he means to you to another person so that they would understand, how would you do it?

Since we're starting this Sunday with the concept of humility in our understanding of God. We're admitting that our words are just words. Our understanding is primarily born out of our own personal experiences. And that God is just infinitely bigger than the words we use to describe him.

Our scripture starts in this place too. We have two passages from the same larger story. We'll read and dig into what we can learn from each one. Both of these passages are from the book of Job. There is too much about this book to include here. You'll have to watch the service online to get the background about the book of Job and this story.

Read Job 38:1-9.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What does it say to you about God, and our ability to comprehend all of who God is?

Did you struggle at all with the tone of God's response?

The primary truth seen in this passage, is that God is beyond our ability to understand who God is ... full stop. The passage is fairly harsh and feels snarky. That's simply chocked up to the language, context, and culture of the day. However, the truth is the same. We cannot begin to comprehend or understand God...even a little bit. All we know are our experiences with him. And our understanding and words about God are only that. The examples God uses to ask Job to explain are not necessarily intended to be specific questions to be answered. Because science has allowed us to answer some of these...quite accurately also. This passage is a poetic way to talk about the nature of God. So, when we talk about God, we start from this place of humility. God is infinitely bigger than our ability to understand or describe him. That should help us frame how we talk about him.

How does this understanding help you to relate to God?

Read job 42:1-6.

What jumped out to you from this passage?

What does it say about our ability to comprehend all of who God is?

And how do we now relate to this God?

This is Job realizing he cannot comprehend all of who God is. God spent four chapters asking these rhetorical questions. Not to quiz Job. Job may have had the answer to some of the questions. But it's to remind Job that he cannot take in all of who God is. And Job is admitting that truth here. However, the most interesting part of this passage, and in our own spiritual journey, the truth we cannot understand and explain all of who God is, frees us from having to figure it all out. We don't have to have complete understanding. We don't have to be able to answer all the questions. We don't have to worry about having the correct beliefs or being right. Because we never will be. There's no theology exam in heaven. What a relief. What freedom!! We don't have to try to know all the right things.

III Challenge.

This first Sunday was to help orient us to begin an honest conversation around, "*What are we talking about when we talk about God?*" And that conversation HAS TO begin with the realization that no matter how long we've been following Jesus, we're humble enough to acknowledge and admit that what we know about God is just a drop in the bucket. Which is both freeing and humbling. And it's the start of the journey of being able to talk about God, and our relationship with him, in a way that's more than just recounting stories. It's a way to share who God is, to us, and have an impact on the world around us. This is a lifelong journey, so give yourself grace as you continually learn more about God.

So, what would the first step of that journey of humility look like for you?