

LEAVING HOME ... TRAVELLIN' LIGHT

Jesus' earth work
Philippians 2:6-11
WEFC December 14, 2008

This is the age of the common man and along with the common man comes the common God.

But the God of Scripture is anything but common, ordinary, regular.

He is so unique, so one of a kind, so special ... that no one even comes close to His qualifications, character or abilities.

God, ... not to often do we try to think about Him because how do you think about someone who is so out of the box?

There are a number of people, younger ones who have done a bit of commentary on God. Listen to their theology.

Dear GOD,
Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?
* Lucy

Dear GOD,
I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church.
Is that okay?
* Neil

Dear GOD,
What does it mean You are a Jealous God? I thought You had everything.
* Jane

Dear GOD,
Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy.
* Joyce

Dear GOD,
It rained for our whole vacation and is my father mad! He said some things about You that people are not supposed to say, but I hope You will not hurt him anyway.
Your friend
(But I am not going to tell you who I am)

Dear GOD,
Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother.
* Larry

Dear GOD,
I bet it is very hard for You to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it.
* Nan

Dear GOD,
If You watch me in church Sunday, I'll show You my new shoes.
* Mickey D.

Dear GOD,
We read Thomas Edison made light. But in school they said You did it. So I bet he stole your idea.
Sincerely, Donna

Describing or explaining God ...

God was not meant for books of theology and philosophy.

God was meant for living ... for us to get to know Him and enjoy Him.

Philippians 2:6

Jesus ... who being in the form of God ... emptied Himself ...

The Christmas season highlights the fact that Jesus Christ became incarnate ... that He, being totally God, would also be willing to “pack” or “scrunch” Himself into being a human being.

What Jesus did is amazing, but to understand what “**emptied**” means requires that we need to first grasp what is meant by the phrase ... to be “**in the form of God**”.

When we get that somewhat clear, then we begin to see why the message of Christmas is so special.

Key Thought:

Jesus, who is fully God, took an amazing step in also becoming fully man ... and that’s why we call Him “Savior”.

This is what makes Jesus the Christ, what makes Him stand out, Why it is that Scripture places Him at the highest point.

There is a set of two books called THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, by A. W. Tozer that have helped me in a major way in getting a down to earth glimpse of just who God is. Here we take a look at those insightful and helpful comments.

1. God: The Un-measurable

Isaiah 40:18

To whom ... will you compare God?

40:25

“... who is my equal?” says the Holy One

Psalm 96:4

... great is the Lord and most worthy of praise

God is infinite, without limits, un-measurable.

Our bank accounts have limits. We know their bottom line. Our age is measured and we know that our lives come to an end.

We measure weight, height, value, prestige, ...

But as we speak of God, we find ourselves talking about what we cannot grasp.

God blows out all the limitations that there are.

We can talk about people having limitless energy, but we really mean is that they have a bundle of it, but by no means can they keep on going for ever and ever.

Words like “limitless” and “infinity” can quite accurately refer only to God.

God is beyond measure.

We depend on food, sunlight, others, but God depends on no one.

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise!

The God of Scripture is unmeasurable.

Therefore, to read that Jesus emptied Himself ..., we now begin to get a snapshot of just how significant a step it was that He took.

To the God who is unconfined, without limits, who is truly an unrestricted free agent, who owns everything, has everything at His disposal ... the UNMEASURABLE GOD ...

This God gives that up as He steps into the world.

Here, the One without limits, is now the One who owned little, was “confined” in a human body, experienced limitations, understood restrictions ... whose world once meant observing the universe, ... now His limitless world became very small, living out His days primarily within the borders of the country of Palestine.

The God of the Universe living His life in a restricted area, territory much smaller than our province of Manitoba ... one 25th the size.

It was a big thing for Jesus to empty Himself.

What He once made not hemmed Him in.

The Unmeasurable God emptied Himself and now knew what small boundaries, limitations, restrictions and borders meant.

2. God: The Everywhere Present

Psalm 139:7-10

Again, our brains are not quite able to understand what we read about God.

God is present everywhere because God overflows and fills all areas.

There is no place where God is not present or available. It is impossible to hide from God.

God does not dwell in space, He swallows up space.

Jeremiah 23:24

“Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the Lord. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the Lord.

2 Chronicles 2:6

... since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain Him.

God goes beyond space, He goes beyond the borders. He surrounds space itself.

We can take a pail and submerge it into the ocean a mile down. The bucket is surrounded by the ocean. It is filled with the ocean. The universe is the bucket and God is the ocean.

God is everywhere.

Talk of our God being far away or near, geographically, is technically incorrect.

God is never away from anyone of us.

While we can experience being away from one another, God does not experience distance.

God is always close, always around, always present. God does not experience loneliness or distance.

But when Jesus **emptied Himself**, when He became a man, He felt distance, He understood separation and barriers.

Jesus knew what it was to be lonely, to be abandoned and forsaken.

Being all by yourself is not a pleasant experience at all.

As God, Jesus had it all.

But when He became a Man, things changed radically.

The God who was in the know, always where the actions was, was now in an entirely different scene.

He was only get a piece of the pie.

Children lined up in the cafeteria of a religious school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The teacher made a note: "Take only one, God is watching." At the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A boy wrote a note: "Take all you want, God is watching the apples."

What God's Word means when there is talk of "distance" is this:

In spiritual jargon CLOSENESS and LIKENESS are the same thing.

On the other side, **REMOTENESS equals DISSIMILARITY.**

When we talk about our friends and enemies, our friends are "close" to us and our enemies are "distant". Our statements are not meant to convey distance, but likeness.

If we find ourselves distant from God, what is meant is we are shut out from experiencing God's presence, not because He is way out in heaven and we are on earth.

Rather, what happens is that because we are DISSIMILAR in our nature, there is no common ground - we sense a REMOTENESS from God.

Therefore **God is not far away in distance, but far away in character.**

3. God: The Perfectly Holy

1 Timothy 6:15,16

... God, the blessed and only Ruler, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light ...

The Bible is filled with talk of that which is HOLY.

God's heaven is filled with HOLINESS.

Most of us today do not expect people to be holy. We learned early that our world is saturated with evil.

We do not expect to have honest politicians, honest businesses, honest parents, honest friends, honest children.

Our hope is that they are honest most of the times, but perfectly holy? ... let's be reasonable!

But when it came to God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit ... they got along famously and this happened in an

atmosphere of holiness ... impeccable holiness, without a flaw in it at all.

God does not become holier.

He always was perfectly holy and remains that way.

He defines or explains holiness. He gives the concept its meaning.

It describes Him.

Here is our God - pure, clean, undirtied, without deficiency, no flaws, no repairs, no modifications, no growing up, no transitions, no development ...

This God of ours lives in unapproachable light.

... and then we think of Jesus ... **who being fully God, emptied Himself ...**

Jesus left a perfect residence and perfect relationships with His Father and the Holy Spirit, and He became flesh and entered into unholiness.

It was not small, insignificant step to leave that all behind.

In His heaven, things worked.

Nothing broke down; there was no malfunctioning.

There were no needed adjustments, no disappointments, nothing forgotten or overlooked, no detail left unnoticed.

That was amazing holiness.

Now to the King eternal, immortal ...

How different it was with the people Jesus came face to face with on earth.

On earth, few things, if any were genuinely holy.

It was into this world that Jesus came and lived ... to explain not conceptually what holiness was, but to explain it by living it out, by demonstration.

As Jesus lived, He walked among hatred, jealousy, impurity, anger, fear ... anything but holiness.

But holiness did not run, nor did it avoid. It entered, stuck around and worked until it appeared in others.

Rather, He deliberately and purposefully stepped into our world so that we might understand the joy, goodness and blessing of holiness found in Him.

He took it on the chin time and again because of our unholiness so that in the end we might be brought back to Himself.

He had the best and purist of life ... and yet He emptied Himself, not of His purity, but of His ideal surroundings so that we might get the picture, so that we might just see the richness of who He is and what He has to offer.

4. God: The Eternal

1 Timothy 1:17

Again we are working in an area that is beyond anything we can fathom.

God is always ... alive, existing, never dying, without beginning and without end.

That may sound like a rather heavy statement, but it is true,

Our God does not depend on anything to wake up tomorrow morning.

He does not need sleep, food, drink, Manitoba Hydro, the provincial government, nor the federal government. He does not need or have parents.

He does not have a health plan, for He does not get sick or old.

He is ageless.

He does not decay, deteriorate or die.

Beginning is a word that neither applies nor has any meaning when it comes to describing God.

God does not punch a clock or have birthdays.

He does not have a past or a future. It is always NOW for God.

He knows our tomorrows as if they were yesterdays.

This is the God of the Bible.

Known for their luxury watches, Swiss watchmaker Patek Philippe has also become well-known for its clever advertising slogan:

"You never actually own a Patek Philippe; you merely take care of it for the next generation."

... think of Jesus ... **who being fully God, emptied Himself ...**

Jesus, who we read in **Philippians 2:8 ... humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death – even death on the cross.**

The eternal God, stepped into time, submitted to living within a 24 hour day, took on a human body that has limit after limit, and then choose to die as the sacrifice for our sin.

Somehow Jesus who is God, who is LIFE itself, dies.

God, who is ETERNAL, gets locked into time.

... and this He does willingly.

This He does in obedience to His Father's directive – the great plan of salvation.

5. God: The All Powerful

In heaven as the ages wrap up, we hear a large group saying in **Revelation 19:6**

Hallelujah! For the Lord God ALMIGHTY reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

Throughout the pages of God's Word we read of God's power, that everything is possible with Him.

When it comes to the power of the intellect, its source is in God; the power of might, its source is in God.

In God resides all power.

Even though God gives us His power, He loses none of it Himself.

It never becomes greater, nor does it diminish.

God sustains, contains, creates ... and He never runs short of power.

He is able to control planets, galaxies, stars, but He also is able to change a person's hatred, remove their fear, heal their body.

God's power reaches into each and every realm.

Nothing is beyond the authority of His power.

This is who Jesus is.

He stands at the top, wielding power over everyone and everything, wisely, righteously and purposefully.

He even raises the dead.

... Jesus ... **who being fully God, emptied Himself ...**

The all-powerful Son of God who shaped creation itself, steps into the world and “gives up” on the usage of force.

He sets much of it aside so that His Father’s plan can be accomplished.

When hungry, He refuses to use that power to feed Himself.

When threatened, He restrains using His power from dealing with His enemies.

When tired, He refuses to get a boost from being divinely recharged.

Yes, there were miracle times, when we got a glimpse of what He could do, but He used that power as a demonstration, to get us to see who it was that really was among us.

When whipped He did not over-power.

When crucified, He did not perform a miracle and float off the cross.

When arrested, He did not bring in a division of angels and resist arrest.

Jesus instead used His power in a very different way. He directed its use into following point by point His Father’s plan ... a plan that had Him die on the Cross as a sacrifice for sin – mine and yours.

That is how Jesus used power.

His was a battle that would win by love rather than by force.

There was time to use power, and a time for restraint – and Jesus knew the timing for both.

People struggle to see Jesus’ significance

Some years ago, the distinguished publishing house of Grosset & Dunlap brought together a panel of 28 educators and historians and asked them to select the hundred most significant events of history, then list those events in order of importance. After months of labor, the panel reported that they considered the most significant event of history to be the discovery of America. In second place was the invention of movable type by Gutenberg. Eleven different events tied for third place, and five events tied for fourth place. The events tying for fourth were the writing of the Constitution of our country, the development of ether, the development of the x-ray, the discovery of the airplane, and the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus tied for fourth.

Bruce Thielemann, "Christus Imperator,"

He emptied Himself.

He remained God all the way through, but He did not use what He could have used ... in order that He might identify with us, that we might see Him as one of us, that we might get the message that God cared so much for us, that He became like us.

He emptied Himself so that we could be filled ... with His grace, holiness, righteousness, truth, wisdom and life.

It is only when we read that first phrase ... that the next lines make sense.

Jesus, ... **who being in very nature God ...**

This Jesus who was nothing less than God Himself ...

This Jesus who stands at the top of all ...

It is this Jesus who ... this God who ...

- **was not so stuck on His position of being God that He could not see need of see it and not do anything about it.**
- **knowing who He was, His greatness, His perfectness, did not let it isolate Him, but involved Him**
- **though He was at the top was not afraid of going to the bottom**
- **was everything, could become in the eyes of the world a zero.**
- **became also a human ... not a move upward, nor a promotion**
- **though He became man, did not give Himself to being the “elite” man, but chose instead to be a servant ... intentionally**
- **who as a servant, listened to His Heavenly Father with such intensity that even His Father’s request that He die on a Cross as a sacrifice for sin ... even to that extent Jesus obeyed.**

**The Unmeasurable,
Everywhere Present, Perfectly Holy,
Eternal, All Powerful
JESUS**

Attitude:

Identity or Nature (being God) does not restrict but enhances Ministry.

Purity does not lead to isolation, but involvement.

Eternalness does not lead to aloofness, but concern.

Power does not lead to abuse, but gentleness.

Unmeasurableness does not lead to arrogance, but sensitivity.

Became human

... but not just any kind of human.

Rather than staying at the top of the heap, Jesus worked His way to the bottom.

Became a servant

And as a servant did not just perform servant duties, but went the extent of listening to His Master, His Father, and doing what was assigned to Him, even dying.

Died on a Cross

In dying, Jesus did not die a peaceful death, but a violent and horrible death ... on a cross.

No position was too low or assignment too insignificant for Jesus to do ... so honored was He to do His Father's will.

Jesus did not have "attitude".

Instead His attitude was amazing.

The end result?

One day every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus is Lord ... just who He said and demonstrated Himself to be.

In 1998, German Theologian Gerd Ludemann renounced Christianity. "I no longer describe myself as a Christian," said Ludemann, and he explained his decision: "A Christian is someone who prays to Christ and believes in what is promised by Christian doctrine. So I asked myself, 'Do I pray to Jesus; do I pray to the God of the Bible?' And I don't do that."

He went on to declare that Christian descriptions of Jesus as "Lord of the world" were "arrogant and ignore reality." He continued, "I don't think Christians know what they mean when they proclaim Christ as Lord of the world. That is a massive claim. If you took that seriously, you would probably have to be a fundamentalist. If you can't be a fundamentalist, then you should give up Christianity for the sake of honesty."

This is Christmas.

Jesus ... who being in the form of God ... emptied Himself.

We've got to get that first part ... who being in the form of God ... if we are going to understand Christmas.

Key Thought:

Jesus, who is fully God, took an amazing step in also becoming fully man ... and that's why we call Him "Savior".

What do you call Him?