

## **Not At All Like Me (Overwhelmed by a Mighty God Part 5)**

For the past few weeks we have been talking about being overwhelmed by a Mighty God. Specifically we've been discussing his nature and some of the characteristics of God. In previous weeks we have discussed the fact that God is self-existent, self-sufficient and all sufficient, eternal, omnipresent (not limited by space or time), omniscient (God knows everything - including the best and the worst about you), omnipotent (God is all powerful), God has wisdom and knowledge he wants to share with you, God knows what he wants to make of us, and God hears our every cry.

I shared with you last Sunday these three passages of Scripture. The word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Isaiah 55:8-9

And hear what the Lord spoke in Numbers 23:19. **“God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind.”** Numbers 23:19

And finally hear what the Lord said in Psalm 50. **“These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you.”** Psalm 50:21 We talked last week about the danger of making God in our image, making him like us. We made the point that God is not like us, specifically with regard to love, forgiveness and his view of sin. This morning I want to discuss some other ways in which God is not like us.

**God is not like us when it comes to marking time.** God stands outside of and apart from time. I told you over the past few weeks that God is eternal. We could be considered immortal in that we have a beginning but no ending. We will live forever in either heaven or hell. But God is eternal. He had no beginning and he has no ending. We are finite. He is infinite. The bible says **“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”** Psalm 90:2.

So God stands outside of and apart from time. Warren Weirsbe said, “While God works in time, he is not limited by time...He could have delivered Israel from Egypt in a moment, yet He preferred to invest eighty years in training Moses...God can

accomplish in one day what it would take others a millennium to accomplish.” God works in time but he is not limited by time.

We have an entirely different view of time don't we? We are on an immediate time frame while he is the God of the long haul. For me, everything must be done in a hurry but for God, time is viewed from an entirely different perspective. God doesn't hurry because the bible says, **“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” 2 Peter 3:8** He stands outside of time because he is God. The passage continues, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9**

We make judgments and assumptions about God based on our understanding of time and his timing. We think God is wrong or uncaring if he doesn't move as fast or as quickly as we think he should. But our perspective is so limited, our understanding so narrow. We are bound and limited by time and can only see the immediate and how it fits with our plans and desires. God sees a bigger and greater picture that addresses more than just our immediate situation. He is moving in his timing because he doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance. His timing and agenda includes and involves us, but it involves others as well. He knows and understands the beginning from the end of all things. He sees how it will work, how it all must work and he moves then at his pace, in his time. We can't get him to panic with us because he is not like us. God won't hurry because there is no need for him to hurry. He is the eternal and Sovereign Lord over all time. Relax and trust him and his timing.

Allow me to give you an example of the difference between our time and God's view of time. The bible gives us two different ways to view the birth of Christ. One is found in Luke 2. **“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria) Luke 2:1-2.** This was a particular, specific moment in history, a moment in time, fixed upon a calendar. This is the way we view time, the way we mark it – by the occurrence of our history set within the calendar year – when Cyrenius was governor. But another picture is found in Galatians 4 and gives us an entirely different way of marking time. **“But when the fulness of**

**the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Galatians 4:4.** God was outside of time but chose to work within time. This is the view, not of us marking time, but of the timing of heaven, when everything was ready.

The fullness of time. This had to do with God’s plan, his purpose, his agenda for the kingdom. It wasn’t about watches and dates on the calendar, it was about everything being just as it was meant to be for Christ to come into this world to redeem us from our sin. God moves according to the fullness of time while we are still tied to our calendar and our watch. He understands the dimensions of eternity and his agenda is tied to his will and not to our whim or our desire at the moment. His timing is designed to secure what is in the best interest for us and for others, not just for the short term or the here and now, but for eternity. Eternity is always in the picture with regard to his timing. His timing is not like ours.

I’ve spent so much time wanting God to hurry up and do something when he had everything under control. His lack of response to my panic is frustrating. “God, aren’t you as panicked and worried as I am. Come on. Go, do it, move, do something.”

Remember the Andy Griffith episode when the rich guy’s car broke down on a Sunday. Everything was closed but they got Gomer to open up Wally’s service station. Gomer didn’t have the part. He had to get it from Mt. Pilot (It’s gonna cost ye extra.) Barney and Andy are relaxing on the front porch when Barney says, “You know what I think I’ll do?” “What?” “Think I’ll go home, take a little nap, go over to Thelma Lou’s, watch a little tv. Yep. Think that’s what I’ll do. Go home. Little nap, then over to Thelma Lou’s for tv. Yep.” And the rich guy shouts “Go. Go on. Go home. Take a nap, go to Thelma Lou’s and watch tv. Do it. Do it.”

We are frustrated and angry and we want everything and everyone to move at our pace and if God doesn’t we think it’s a problem. God has everything under control. Trust him and his timing, even when he isn’t moving as quickly as you desire. Even when it seems he has fallen asleep at the wheel. He is God. He doesn’t slumber or sleep. He isn’t going to be late because his timing is tied to his faithfulness and his character. His timing is not like ours. He won’t ever have to hurry because he won’t ever be behind or late. His delays are part of his ultimate plan. He is not like us.

Isaiah 57:15 describes him as the Holy One who inhabits eternity. He dwells in forever but he is in touch with us today. He is not like us but you can trust him and his timing.

I want to mention something else, almost akin to the idea of time and that is in regard to his attention to us. **God is not like us when it comes to his attention span.** I'm amazed at how short, how brief the attention span of Americans has become. We are used to 30 second sound bites. You can't keep anyone's attention for long. I guess the truth is, to use a word we don't hear too often any longer, we are just fickle. We are always changing. Our interest in things and in people wavers. We are prone to change. Our hobbies and interests change. Remember all the things you tried as a child? "Dad, I want to play the clarinet." How many of you have instruments that your parents bought you that are still up in the attic somewhere? "Mom, I want to play guitar, violin, flute, drums." "Dad I want to take gymnastics, play football, tennis. Can we buy some golf clubs? I want to play golf. Can we buy a horse?" Our tastes change and our attention wanders and wavers and wanes. We are fickle. We are prone to embracing fads. It's the latest thing, the latest style, the new clothes, you have to have the latest shoes and accessories. It's why I don't understand women getting tattoos. Some wouldn't think of wearing last years style of shoes, but they are pretty sure they want a tasmanian devil tattooed on their shoulder for the rest of their life?

Our attention span can be pretty brief. We forget the names of people we just met. "I'm sorry but what did you say your name was?" (A little guy in children's church a few Sunday's ago asked me, "now what did you say your name was?" How soon we forget!) We just can't stay very focused on any one thing.

Our relationships are subject to that same kind of fickleness. We are infatuated one day and by the next week we are bored with the relationship. Even our relationship with God can seem subject to that fickleness at times. Like Israel, we are hot one moment and cold the next. "I really feel close to the Lord today" and tomorrow I feel like God is a million miles away. One moment I'm seeking God in the altar and the next I'm yielding to temptation and sin. How can this be? How can our feelings change so quickly? How can we be so fickle?

We may begin to think of God as being like us in this way. Maybe God's feelings toward us change just that quickly. Perhaps God was thinking about me this morning

and He loved me this morning, but then by afternoon, his opinion changed. Maybe he saw a few things I did that disappointed him and now, after the day I had, He isn't so fond of me. Maybe he only cares about me when I'm out-performing everyone else, when I'm really doing something for God, but on the off days, when I'm out of sorts and don't seem to care, maybe God changes his mind about me. We begin to think God is altogether like us but he isn't.

God is not fickle. The bible says with God there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17 NIV reads he "does not change like shifting shadows." The bible says he is the same, "yesterday, today and forever." **"I the Lord do not change." Malachi 3:6.** It doesn't get much more plain than that.

He doesn't change, but perhaps his attention wanders at times. Maybe his attention was drawn to someone else, someone better than me. Maybe he just can't stay focused. Maybe he has attention deficit like many of us. The truth is, His attention is never diverted from us. Matthew's gospel (10:29-30) tells us that his attention is tuned to his creation, that he sees the sparrow fall and we are of much more value to him than the sparrows. Even the hairs on your head are numbered. Talk about attention to detail! How much attention do you require? More than that?

He is always attentive to his children, even to the smallest detail of our life. He is not tired of caring for you. He is not neglectful of your needs or the burdens of your heart. You have his utmost attention. He will not forget you. Do you know that God says of his people in their distress, "You may think that I have somehow forgotten you or forsaken you." **"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;" Isaiah 49:16** . I don't think he can forget us. We are tattooed on the palm of his hands. His eye is upon us. We have his attention.

2 Chronicles declares, **"For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."** 2 Chronicles 16:9 He is not like us. He won't forget, his attention won't be diverted in a time of trouble. His eyes are fixed upon you and you can trust him. He is watching over you!

Finally, **God is not like us in his view of life and death.** He is not like us in our

view of life. He is the author and creator of life. He breathes life into us. He is the source of life so his view, his perspective, his understanding of life is far beyond our perception. Life is what we cling to and experience. Life is what he gives and who he is. We see life as being all about us don't we? He sees life as being about the whole world, about seeing his creation, all of his creation, coming to know him as Savior and Lord.

The truth is, I don't know how he views life. We can talk about it in all kinds of ways. Life is a journey, a process, a training ground, a place of preparation for the next life. I don't know. Somehow life is about knowing Him, experiencing him, becoming all he has created and called us to be. My view of life today is that life is fierce and mysterious and wonderful and fun and painful and breathtaking and heartbreaking and joyful and worrisome and brilliant and is only for a season. His view of life is that it is for eternity. Most of us are afraid of losing our life. God's concern is that we might miss our life. We might let it slip past – that we might actually live life without ever noticing it.

But it is not only his view of life that is unlike ours but even more so is his view of death. Described in the bible as the last enemy to be conquered, death is that final and ferocious thing that at one time held us captive by our fear of its finality. It terrorized human kind until a showdown was held in a borrowed tomb outside the city walls of Jerusalem. Death's grip was broken as Jesus rose from the grave, the first-fruits of all who will rise to everlasting life through faith in Christ. Death could not hold him and although it may still reach us and inflict its wound, it cannot and will not hold us either.

I will be the first to tell you I'm sick and tired of death and its pain. I'm tired of preaching funerals, tired of saying good bye, if even for just a little while, to the saints who have finished the race and gone before us. I rejoice with them, but I grieve for all of us. But God has a different view of the death of his saints. He weeps for us and with us, as Jesus did with Mary and Martha who grieved over the death of their brother Lazarus, but every good bye here is a welcome home from God's perspective.

The bible says, "**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.**" **Psalm 116:15. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes', says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'"**

### **Revelation 14:13.**

Death is a part of life on this planet, but because of Jesus and his resurrection, death is not the end. It is not the final parting. It is not a final goodbye. It's why God takes a different view of death than we do, because he knows what we only hope for and believe by faith. He knows of that life beyond the grave.

The bible speaks of death, not as that bleak and final end and separation but as the sowing of a seed, a necessary pre-cursor to an incredible new life and existence just ahead. Paul writes, **“So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” 1 Corinthians 15:42-44**

God knows what is ahead. He sees our death differently than we do, as the beginning and not the end. He knows that the death of his child does not place that person in our past but rather places them in our future. He knows that death for his children is simply stepping into his eternal presence. He knows that our death means we are home and safe at last in his presence where God himself wipes the tears from our eyes and where there is no more parting or pain, no more sickness and no more death. He knows that our death means the beginning of unspeakable joy.

I in no way mean to minimize the pain of death and the loneliness and grief we experience. I understand many of you are hurting today, grieving so deeply. But at the same time, I want to assure you that the God we serve is the God who comforts us with the certain hope of the resurrection. Death does not have the final word for the saints of God. Standing in a cemetery, Jesus declared, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” John 11:25.** Then to prove his point, he called Lazarus from the grave and he came out of the tomb, alive and well. Death no longer has the last word. God is not like us in his view of life and death. He alone has the last word and it is a word of victory, triumph and everlasting life. God knows that not even death can separate us from our loved ones and from his abiding love for us.

Last week I read a passage from the book *Celebrating the Wrath of God*. I want

to read a story from this book as I close this morning.

He is not like us when it comes to his view of death. He sees it as something less than permanent. Temporary, just for awhile from this perspective. So we sorrow, but not as those who have no hope. We trust in the God whose timing is always best and whose attention is always upon us and we rest in the knowledge that nothing, **“...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.”**  
**Romans 8:38-39.**

Not even a little bit of death can harm people like us. Not when our hope is in the giver of life. I'm glad his view of life and death is not like mine because his view fills us with hope. Rest in the Lord, the giver of life and trust him with all your heart for He is not at all like us.