



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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GOD IS GREAT! GOD IS GOOD!

~ Scripture: Psalm 100 & Isaiah 40:12-15 ~

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OPENING OF THE SERVICE

Today we celebrate our freedoms as Americans. One of those freedoms is **WORSHIP**.

Anyone living on American soil has the freedom to worship—*externally*.

But I'm not sure we always experience freedom to (in) worship—*internally* (on the inside).

Perhaps because we do not have a right understanding of God!

All worship begins with an acknowledgment of the character of God!

Habakkuk 3:2 – *“Lord, I have heard of your fame;*

I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord.

Renew them in our day; in our time make them known.”

THE SERMON PROPER

Often you hear Matt say: *“Let me say that again”*. We're going to use that as the title of a new series of sermons beginning today. This summer we are going to re-visit our **core values** as a church—and will do so yearly—in an attempt to understand the church God had in mind when He established it at Pentecost. And the church God has in mind for us (DUMC) to be.

WORSHIP is the first core value we will look at. The church God has in mind is a church that worships. . .that exalts the power & majesty of a holy and just God.

Our **SCRIPTURE** is *Psalm 100* –

¹ *Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.*

² *Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.*

³ *Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

⁴ *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

⁵ *For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

This Psalm naturally breaks down into two parts:

- Part that focuses on GOD's GREATNESS – see verse 3a (underlined above)
- Part that focuses on GOD's GOODNESS -- see verse 5 (underlined above)

IS THERE A DISTINCTION? If ours was a God who is powerful & mighty, but not personal, approachable, or loving toward us—then we would fear Him and shy away from Him.

If ours was a God who is good toward us, constantly showing us mercy, patience, and love, but not mighty & powerful—then we would have a hard time trusting Him (i.e.: believing Him to be strong and powerful enough to confront AND to help us confront all that is wrong in our lives & in our world).

But neither of these is the God of the Bible! Our God is BOTH **personal AND great!** He is so beyond us, yet so intertwined with us. . . He has the big (complete) picture and yet He is in tune with every minute detail of the universe He has created.

We are finite. We are limited. Limited in so many ways: in space, in time, in knowledge, in power. But God is not so limited. He is eternal, infinite, almighty. He has us in His hands; but we never have Him in ours. *Like us*, He is personal; but *unlike us*, He is great. The Bible stresses God's personal concern for His people; it stresses the gentleness, tenderness, sympathy, patience and yearning compassion He shows towards us. Yet the Bible never lets us lose sight of His majesty, His unlimited dominion over all His creatures.

If we are going to worship Him, we have to see both sides of His nature: *the macro* and *the micro*.

I want to dwell on His GREATNESS this morning—because we are all stuck in our finiteness. We are so self-absorbed. And we don't always see Him as He really is.

How big is your God this morning? How big is your perception of God? Who do you know God to be?

A generation ago, J. B. Phillips wrote a telling little book entitled: *Your God Is Too Small*. That captures it for most of us. For many. . .

- God is limited to what I can conceive in my little mind (which makes Him little more than a figment of my imagination).

~ OR ~

- God is limited to what I experience (which may have been disappointing). Looking over the landscape of your life, you might conclude that *at best* God is lackadaisical & disinterested. . . *at worst* He is weak & ineffectual. He may seem present to others but absent to you—like “*where are the police when you need them?*” I've gone through times when I could see God at work in other people's lives, but not mine.

Because we can't get out of our "skin", we only see a tiny fragment of a much larger reality. I declare to you this morning that GOD IS GREAT!

Remember the childhood prayer (table blessing): *"God is great, God is good.
Let us thank Him for our food.
By His hand we all are fed.
Give us, Lord, our daily bread."*

- He is *EL SHADDAI* ["God Almighty"]
- He is *EL ELYON* ["The Most High God"] You can go no higher!

~ These are Hebrew words taken straight out of the O.T. ~

One reason why our faith is so feeble and our worship is so flabby is that we have such a limited grasp on WHO it is we're worshipping (who it is we're dealing with).

THE SERMON ILLUSTRATED

Let me give you a picture of God's greatness this morning. Turn to Isaiah 40. . .

¹² *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,*

or with the breadth of His hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,

or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

¹³ *Who has understood the mind of the LORD , or instructed Him as his counselor?*

¹⁴ *Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten Him, and who taught Him the right way?*

Who was it that taught Him knowledge or showed Him the path of understanding?

¹⁵ *Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;
He weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.*

Some breathtaking analogies! And on & on he goes. . .

²² *He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.*

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

The world dwarfs us all at times. But God dwarfs the world!!!

²⁶ *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these stars?*

As a shepherd leads his sheep, calling each by its name, and counts them to see that none are lost or strayed, so God does with stars and planets!

You see, God is GREAT (powerful & strong beyond all measure)! But He is GOOD (personally looking after each thing He has created). And that includes you and me.

²⁷ *O Israel, how can you say that the Lord doesn't see your troubles and isn't being fair?*

And yet we do!

How big is God? [Refer back to underlines in verses 12, 15, & 22.] How big is your God. Or, if you please, how big is God to you?

If God is as big as Isaiah portrays, don't you think He's big enough to handle your most stifling problem? And the most critical problems facing our world today?

When Isaiah asks, "*Have you not known? Have you not heard?*"—which he does three times in this passage—He rebukes us for our slowness to believe and our sluggishness in worship. It's like he's saying: "*What is your problem?*"

The church God had in mind is a church that will believe in God *as God*. . .sovereign, all-seeing, almighty! It is a church that will make much of the majesty of His Son and our Lord & Savior JC! It is a church that will "*wait upon the LORD*" until we know what He wants of us and where He wants to take us. When we do, we will find our strength renewed. . .we will *soar on wings like eagles*, we will *run & not grow weary*, we will *walk and not faint*.

CONCLUSION

Our text says: "*Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. **Know that the Lord is God.***" [Psalm 100:2]

Do you know that this morning?

I want you to know & adore Him as *Friend, Savior, Helper*. But I also want you to catch a glimpse of Him *high & lifted up*.

Let's not just "go to church". When we do come together, let us worship Him in spirit & in truth.

That is life's purpose; that is why we were created.

AND

It's what we long for. It's what our society cries out for—something to bring the disparate threads of life together.

Worship does that! Worship brings WORD & MUSIC together. When that happens for you, it will give you:

- A sense of safety (hence the word "sanctuary")
- Rescue from the tyranny of the immediate

- Power to change (as you see the Holy Spirit at work in others' lives)

BENEDICTION

If you're going through a time of testing or trial, may I encourage you today to worship Him—this God who is exalted in power & majesty, yet eager to be friends with us. May you see Him in a fresh way:

- See Him in His glory & greatness and worship Him
- Be touched by His nearness & goodness and trust Him
- Let Him take control of Your life. . .and powerfully change you into His likeness

Know this: *“Living becomes an awesome business when you realize that you spend every moment of your life in the sight and company of an omniscient, omnipresent Creator.”*

[J. I. Packer in Knowing God, p. 76]