

Text: Heb 13.8
St Stephen's

Dec 17th, 2006
Sun AM

He's Always the Same!

What's God like?" That's an important question. This Advent we are offering a message series called "**Behold Your God**".

Two weeks ago, Bill talked about **the joy of God**. He is **the most joyous being** in the whole cosmos. He wants to share his joy with you.

Last week I talked about **where God is**, and I said that he is **closer than the air you breathe** – and if that makes you a bit nervous, then take time to look deeply into his heart and discover that he is the shepherd who cares for his sheep, the physician who can heal every heart, and **the closer he is the safer you are**.

Last night Bill talked about **the goodness of God**. How when you become a friend of Jesus you discover that God is your Father and **he is good. All the way through**. That this world is your Father's house. It is good. My life is my Father's gift, and it is good. That even with all my challenges, my difficulties, even my failures... even with the blunt reality of evil in this world, it is good to be me, good to be living the life my Father has given me. Because **God is good!**

This morning we worship in the midst of our Lessons and Carols service, taking a **bird's eye view** of the history of redemption. It gives us a unique perspective on our question, "**What is God like?**"

If you were going to **sum up** a sweep of tens of thousands of years within our sight today, you would probably say something like, "**Times have changed!**"

We know that is true. **Every created thing changes**. Twelve years ago when we came here we had all **6 children at home** - we thought that season would never end; we thought it was eternal! But now our **nest is empty** and the kids are up and out and Bec and I sleep through the night and have long evenings together and we are looking forward to grandchildren. Life brings change. Even **the galaxies** have a life cycle of birth, growth, and eventually, death and decay. You might naturally think God is like that. But you would be wrong. Again and again in the Bible God says things like this -

"I the LORD do not change..." Mal 3:6

Think with me about that. When the Bible says that God does not change, it means that...

- **His Existence Does Not Change**

Things that God created have a beginning and an end, but God himself does not. Psalm 102 says it like this...

[Heaven and earth] will perish, but you remain... Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. Ps 102:26-27

So when **your child asks**, “Who made God?”, the answer is that **no one** made him; he has **always been there**. He was never young and he will never grow old. The scriptures say that he is “*eternal*”.

- **His Character Does Not Change**

There are some things that can change your character, but **God’s character does not change**. He is **always** holy and just, always merciful and gracious.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. Jas 1:17

James’ point is that **He is always a Father** who loves to give good gifts to his children. He’s never going to trick you or deceive you or tempt you. His character does not change.

God’s unchanging eternal nature is a **large thought**, one that **goes against** everything we see and know about the created world. Let’s think some more about this real God, this unchanging God... When the scriptures say He is unchanging, **three themes** rise to the surface – that are **unchanging pillars** you can build your life upon...

Pillar #1. God’s Love Never Changes

One of the reasons we get frustrated with relationships is because **people change** from one day to the next. We are unpredictable, inconsistent. We can get grumpy, cranky, or frustrated about things that haven't gone as planned. Or we grow a whole **new set of interests** as we move through life’s seasons.

Here’s the problem: **when people change, your love for them often changes**. We say, “You're not the man I married!” or “My sweet child has become this rebellious teenager.” Change makes love hard.

The Bible says **God is not like that**; His love never changes no matter what changes.

The LORD appeared... saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love..." Jer 31:3

God never has bad days. God is never moody, capricious or fickle. Nobody ever says, "Boy, what got into God today? Better give him some space." His love is **something you can count on**, no matter what you **can't count on**.

So when tragedy strikes - or when we pray and don't get an immediate answer - or when things don't go your way, just remember **God's love for you hasn't changed** – not one bit.

Pillar #2. God's Truth Never Changes

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." Is 40:8

Lots of times I find that **I said something – and I wanted to take it back**. Maybe I was **upset** and spoke too soon. Or I **didn't know** what I was talking about. Maybe I **changed my mind**. I've had to take back a lot of things I have said over the years. But when God speaks, it is different. Jesus said,

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."
Mt 24:35

And **they have not**, have they!

Human words may often prove unsteady and unstable and undependable. But not God's words. They were true yesterday, and they are true today. He never breaks his promises, and his guidance can always be trusted.

Pillar #3. God's Son Never Changes

The authors of the New Testament came to understand that God's unchanging truth and his unfailing compassion were fulfilled in Jesus Christ **across the entire span of our lives**. That **no matter** what the season, no matter how hard the day, no matter what my culture, no matter what my own failures – that his love was steady and his truth was dependable.

They knew that **the same Jesus who yesterday inspired and strengthened** the great heroes of our faith – apostles and martyrs and reformers and saints – would

this day inspire and strengthen you and me. No matter! Here is the way they said it:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Heb 13:8

This thought grew upon them. It grew astoundingly large as they came to know Jesus far better. They finally came to see that he was not just the same **across the span of the history of our lives**, but across **the span of the history of the entire created cosmos**.

They came to see that Jesus himself is the **main theme** of the Bible from beginning to end, the **primary author**, and he himself has the **lead role** in its pages.

- He is the **seed** of the woman who shall triumph over the serpent.
- He is the **“child”** whose name shall be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
- He is the **shoot** who shall spring from the stump of Jesse, under whose gracious hand the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together.
- He is the one breathed into the womb of Mary, **whose throne shall last forever. King and God and sacrifice...**
- He is the **word** through whom God speaks the universe into existence.

NT Wright summed it up like this - He is like the **playwright** who has **conceived the great and true story** of the destiny of the universe... he has **authored** every chapter... and he himself **has the lead role**... and he now **invites you onto the stage** alongside him, to take your part in the true story...

When you **accept his invitation** to yield your life/your story to his life/his story you step into **your real and true story**, **he blows his life and love and the healing power of his truth into you**.

“the same yesterday, and today and forever.” No matter...

Have you done that? Accepted his invitation to yield? Received him into all your life? Aren't you **tired of the ups and the downs** and the tragic uncertainties of life lived out of your own resources?

Today would be a wonderful day for the best change of all. He now invites you onto the stage alongside him, to take your part in the true story...

Your **times may change, he says, but I shall not.** No matter.

You may feel overwhelmed, but I am close at hand, closer than the air you
breath – just a prayer away. Always.

Your faith may wax and wane – but I shall not fail you. Not ever.

And if you yield your life to me, you shall share my joy. For ever.

Pastoral Prayer:

We yield to you...

Family and Friends...

Pages of our lives, past present, future...

Give us grace to know your steady hand in uncertain times...

Lord's Prayer