

Monday

Read Psalm 103:1-13

Let's remind ourselves of the answer to a key question: Since God is all-powerful, can God do whatever He wants? No! Since God is almighty he cannot do whatever he wants. The great theologian, Augustine, writes some 1,600 years ago that God cannot do anything for there are "many things he cannot do, and yet is almighty – indeed, [God] is almighty precisely because he cannot do these things. For if he could die, he would not be almighty; if to lie, to be deceived, to do unjustly, were possible for him, he would not be almighty: because if this were in him, he would not be worthy to be called almighty. For our almighty Father, it is quite impossible to sin. He does whatever he... justly wills." God doesn't sin because whatever God does He can just slap a sticker on it that says it isn't a sin – like many tyrants and despots attempt to do in this world – but because God can't do against God's self and God isn't a despot or tyrant. God is not a heavenly tyrant and I think what we have just said will be of use in helping ourselves and others understand that God isn't a tyrant.

How does this understanding of God's all-mightiness alter your thinking about God? And how does it change your thinking about true power and might in this world?

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 45:1-8

A few study (reminder) questions for you from the sermon:

Who is Cyrus?

Why is it a big deal that God anoints Cyrus to carry out God's plan? Bonus: what do you think this means for our contemporary world?

What is the importance of v. 7 as we spoke about it in the sermon? Was this a challenging verse to hear/read?

What do we learn about God's omnipotence from Isaiah 45?

Wednesday

Read Luke 13:1-6

Many people in the ancient world, and even today, believe that a person's suffering is directly proportional to their sin. The more you sin, the more you suffer. Jesus, on more than one occasion, puts that error to rest (as he does in Luke 13). Sin or a lack of sin is not directly proportional to suffering. Innocent people suffer great tragedy. Wicked people sometimes prosper in worldly ways. There is certainly a link between sin and suffering, but a person's or a people's amount of suffering does not necessarily result from how sinful they are. It is much more complicated than that. What God is doing and why God is doing it or allowing it to happen is rarely clear at the time and it doesn't always become clear later – God is the one who is Almighty and this is the wise exercising of his Almighty-ness: it isn't always clear to his creation. Can you live with God knowing that everything you'd like to know isn't clear and won't be clear to you? The Good News is that everything we need to know about living a life with Jesus is clear!

Thursday

Read Luke 13:7-9

We are running out of room for this week. If you need more of a refresher on these points look to the sermon again (it is online on our video, was mailed to you, or can be sent to you if you contact Pastor Seth or the office).

Three things that are clear: God works long-term, God never allows evil to run out of control, and God reveals his answer to evil and vanquishes its power in the cross of Jesus Christ. What about those areas of clarity give your comfort? What are you wrestling to understand about these areas (give them to God in prayer, spend time in scripture, and talk to your pastor!)?

Four things to do in response to God's omnipotence: repent, honor God, follow Jesus, and pray. God is mighty enough to have everything under control and mighty enough to have defeated evil in the cross of Christ and extend that victory to you in Jesus' resurrection!

Friday – read and reflect upon Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31 and Revelation 5:11-14 for Sunday.

Look to the next page for bonus content!

Bonus Content

This week we covered the first phrase of the Apostles Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty. We didn't cover what "I believe" means but we will be tackling that throughout our worship in the coming weeks and did so this past Sunday. But we also didn't talk about the "Father" aspect of God. What follows is more of a biblical/theological look at what is meant by God being father and is by no means exhaustive.

Some people have recently shied away from describing God as father and with fair reasons: the troubled relationships many have with their own earthly fathers and the abuse and trauma many fathers have caused their children. For those who have difficulty calling God "Father" for these reasons, we should have great sympathy and empathy and walk alongside them as we witness to the good, loving, caring father our God is and how in Christ everything is and will be redeemed – including using the name "Father" for God.

Describing God as father is metaphorical. God is not male. Justin Martyr wrote some 1,900 years ago, "To the Father of all things (God), no name is assigned, because he is unbegotten... 'Father' and 'God' and 'Creator' and 'Lord' and 'Master' are not names but designations drawn from beneficent deeds and functions." God either reveals these names to us in Scripture or Scripture uses these names so that we can have a handle on who our magnificent God is and so we can have relatable language to use.

There are three principal sense of God as Father in scripture and what follows is a brief sketch of each:

1. Father as the ultimate creator and source of the whole created order. We can see this in 1 Corinthians 8:6 where Paul describes God as the one who generates all things who himself has no origin, who knows no time, and escapes our reason except in how he reveals himself to us.. We talked about this sense of God the Father during this past Sunday's sermon and will take a dive into God as Creator this coming Sunday, so let's leave this one for the moment.

2. Father as the loving father of believers (thinking specifically of the New Testament). The one prayer that Jesus teaches us specifically starts with this sense of father. The Lord's Prayer starts with "Our Father," and we see this way of using father specifically in Galatians 1:4 and 4:6. The New Testament also uses the phrases "your Father," "your

heavenly Father," and "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," many, many times. This language is not foreign to the Old Testament but used less frequently. God complains that the people have not honored him as their Father in Jeremiah 3:19-22, for instance.

This use of father as God being the loving father of believers speaks of our relationship with God and the closeness and intimacy of that relationship and is where we get the sense that we can cry out to God, "Abba [Dad]! Father!" God adopts us in Jesus Christ and becomes father in this sense of the term. God is the father of believers and desires the close, loving, caring relationship that comes with fatherhood and models this type of caring for fathers and mothers everywhere.

3. God is uniquely father of Jesus Christ. God adopts the people Israel and God adopts followers of Jesus, but God begets and is uniquely father of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Colossians 1:3 and Romans 15:6). This is the sense that Jesus is the Son of God in a way that we are not as children of God. It is this way of understanding the word father that the Apostles Creed is most likely employing. The 20th century theologian Karl Barth writes, "God is the Father in respect to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is his eternal Son." God is most specifically father to Jesus Christ and it is through Jesus Christ that followers of Jesus are God's special adopted children, and in God's act of creating (our first principal sense) that all humans belong to God.

So, what is important to know out of all this? First, I think I should say that there is much more to explore... I always hesitate to give the impression that anything offered is exhaustive. The mystery and glory of God is big and wonderful! Second, God is the loving, adoptive father of all those who call upon and follow Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior, High Priest, and King. Third, God is the father of all that is and the ultimate ground and source of the whole cosmos. Finally, God is uniquely the father of Jesus and Jesus is uniquely God's Son.