

God is Majestic

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[0:00] Psalms 145.5. At the start of Jonathan's open house a couple weeks ago, I exactly on the bell, we had a tornado warning in our area.

! With cameras in hand, to see if they could see the tornado.

Pastor Jason publicly commented, I remember a couple of years ago, that he would love to be able to ride out a hurricane. Some of you may remember a former member of our church, Paul Watkins. He was a storm chaser while in college, and it was because of my relationship with him that I eventually started Storm Now, which delivers severe weather bulletins.

Can anybody try to explain to me why there are thousands of people that would categorize themselves as storm chasers in our country? Why would anyone want to chase down a tornado?

[1:16] Okay, they're stupid. Any other insight? Interest in the sheer power of the storm.

Interest in the sheer power of the storm. Go ahead, Jim. Thrill-seekers. Thrill-seekers. Which is what I was about to say.

We're enthralled with the power of the storm. We're enthralled with things that are so much greater than ourselves. There's just this rush that we get when we're around such things.

Well, our topic this morning is on the majesty of God. And Packer defines majesty as a word which the Bible uses to express the thought of the greatness of God, our Maker and our Lord.

Look at Psalm 145.5. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

[2:25] That's really the whole purpose, my entire goal for this morning, is that we would speak of the glorious splendor of our great God's majesty, and that we would meditate, do so by meditating on all of His wonderful works.

In 2 Peter 1.16, we see that that majesty also extends, of course, to Jesus Christ. We were eyewitnesses of His, Jesus Christ's majesty.

And in Hebrews 1.3, we read, The sun is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.

After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. Packer goes on to say that when applied to God, the word majesty is always a declaration of His greatness and an invitation to worship.

Well, one can't consider the majesty of God without being drawn into worship of God. Psalm 95.6, Come, let us bow down in worship.

[3:35] Let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. God's created us with an amazing diversity of tastes and temperaments.

We have wide varieties in our likes and dislikes around music, around food, art, entertainment. I often wonder on restaurant strip how some of these restaurants stay in business, and of course they're the ones I don't like.

But it's because others have different tastes than I do. There's nothing morally right or wrong about the likes or dislikes in many of these morally neutral areas.

But can we become painfully honest about our coldness toward our God? Aside from our own wicked hearts, I fear that our cultural climate has stunted most of our ability to enter into worship of God.

How is that? Well, there was a time in which it was assumed that one would apply self-discipline to put in the heavy lifting, as it were, of becoming culturally refined.

[4:44] I don't think we do much of that anymore. There are tastes that must be developed, that must be refined, before we can start enjoying the pleasure of it. My youngest son related the essence of my point during a discussion yesterday.

He commented how much he hated running when he started with track and cross-country in ninth grade. He despised it, it was a drudgery, and it was for years.

But it's very interesting to hear him say how now he's finally gotten over that hump, and he actually enjoys and looks forward to going running. There is a joy in it for him.

There's a pleasure in it. How did that happen? Well, it's because he pushed through with discipline until he finally realized the rewards that can only come sometimes by strong perseverance and discipline.

And there's many, many disciplines like that. And yet we're a soft and lazy culture today. And so few of us exercise discipline even as part of our culture, and therefore we lose out on so much reward because of it.

[5:55] What does this all have to do with worship? Well, our God is majestic. He's infinitely more complex than the most accomplished, musical, classical piece of music, which often takes cultural refining before one can appreciate it.

To appreciate him is going to require disciplined, consistent meditation before the pain of discipline begins to give way to the exhilarating experience of being in his presence.

Now, he can certainly come down, and he has many, many, many times with me, and I'm sure with you, and meets us emotionally in our worship of him. And we bless him for that.

But if I'm going to be honest, I so often fall short. I fail to press through in my worship of God and spend the discipline required to realize that experience and to give him the true worship due his name on a more frequent basis.

Well, while our failure to be frequently raptured into spontaneous worship of our great Creator is certainly an indictment of our cold hearts, our deadness of heart must not be used as an excuse to not worship him, any more than the pain of an athlete experiences running around that track for the very first time should cause him to stop his training.

[7:31] We're commanded to reverence our Maker. We have an obligation to worship him. So how is one to worship? How do we foster higher and more majestic thoughts of our God?

Well, Packer points out two ways in which the Scriptures brings us to worship God. Remove from our thoughts of God limits that would make him small, first, and second, compare him with powers and forces which we regard as great.

things like nature, nations, the world, great men, the heavens. Why don't I praise and worship my God more?

Well, why do I sometimes fail to exercise? The answer is often the same. I just don't do it. I'm confronted with his glory every day, all around me, and I just don't stop and worship him.

So this lesson is a call for us to begin doing that. Think of it as a lab, a class with a lab. We're going to be going through many aspects of God's glory, of his majesty this morning.

[8:45] Well, there's a lab portion of this. As we go through each of those aspects, stop and consider your God. Worship him right there in your seat.

As you listen to these things, you're probably either going to have one of two things happen. You're either going to be bored to tears, much like you would if you were sitting in a third grade arithmetic class, because you know all of this information.

You've heard it, if you've been coming to this church all your life, a thousand times. Or, you can take the reminders we're receiving of our glorious God, and choose right there in your seat to lift up worship to him.

We have that choice. So let's bring a smile to his face, by adoring him this morning, by adoring his amazing person.

And as we do, I trust the Spirit will lift some of that lethargy from our souls, and enable us to begin reverencing him with emotion and passion.

[9:54] But if we feel nothing, let's not stop any more than the first thousand times somebody goes around the track, they feel nothing but pain. Let's keep pressing on. Let's keep focusing on our God.

Until we press through, and we see the glory for who he is. Well, Packer presents the majesty of God within the backdrop of his personhood.

In other words, God is both majestic and personal. I find a tendency within my own soul, unsolicited, unfostered, that naturally, unwittingly, sets my God out at a distance.

I often live my life as if he doesn't exist. I struggle believing that he could really find pleasure in any of my pathetic efforts to please him. I'm tempted to believe that he really isn't interested in my

affairs after all.

I often struggle to accept, in spite of everything he said in his word, that my God is emotionally involved with me. It's because of such tendencies that we must frequently stop and consider the personal nature of our God.

[11:06] We'll never be able to worship God with emotion and passion unless we appreciate his personal nature and his emotional involvement with us. It's hard to develop an emotional tie to a computer.

When a computer crashes, my heart does not go out to it in sympathy. But if you put a person in front of me whose heart is breaking over some tragedy and who is weeping out the depths of their sorrows, I will find my eyes welling with tears and my heart begins to feel something of what they're going through.

Or if you play out a story for me of a person who's fought through years of struggle and disadvantage, and finally they are in that circle of triumph. Again, my eyes well with tears and joy with them.

Do you want to know how much you view God as either a computer or a person? Now I know that we have many things that affect our emotions that is physically related.

Every morning I get up, I am dead to the world. But at the same time, when I am presented with a real person in front of me, with a heart and with emotional situations going on, and my heart runs out to them and my eyes well up with tears.

[12:35] And then I read in the word of my God, who expresses some of the same emotional content, and I sit there as dead as a doornail.

Do I view him more as a computer or as a person? If the truth be known, if I really viewed him as a person, would not my heart run out to him as well?

But I somehow see him aloof as just this machine out there going about its business, and not emotionally, intimately involved with his creation, and a God with a heart bigger than any of us could ever comprehend.

He is a person. His heart is breaking every hour over sin and evil and rejection. His heart is exploding with joy when one of his children is living for his pleasure.

This is our God. What does it mean that God is a person? Well, it means a lot of things. But some areas listed in any good systematic theology will include that he thinks and deliberates, is active, has emotions, is volitional, makes choices, is free, can speak, see, hear, grieve, repent, be angry, jealous, and compassionate.

[13:55] I want to briefly consider just one aspect of God's personhood as a way of providing the necessary backdrop to his majesty. As we've already stated, God has emotions.

I can't improve on the statements made by Brian Borgman on his subject from his book, *Feelings and Faith*, which Pastor Jason gave to me a few weeks ago, and I have greatly appreciated and benefited from it.

Quote, Matthew Elliott straightforwardly asserts, it is clear that the Old Testament presents Yahweh as an emotional God. God's emotions play a key role in many texts as God feels with intensity.

The unambiguous biblical portrayal of God is that he has absolute capacity to feel and has perfectly holy emotions. Consider the emotional tone of the following verses that express God's compassion for his people.

We could obviously bring up verses all morning long that deal with the emotional aspect of our God. 1st Psalm 103.13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

[15:11] Do you sense how he is trying to get us to relate? We have compassion on our children. Now think, feel what that feels like. That's what I am feeling as I consider you.

Isaiah 49.15 Can a mother forget the baby at her breast, and have no compassion on the child she is born? Though she may forget, I will not forget you.

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. Your walls are ever before me. What tenderness. What a heart.

What a heart. He loves us beyond the most intimate human relationships can describe. And he wants us to feel something of what he is feeling for us.

Our God is a person. He is not a computer. Of course, we could also talk about God's emotions as it relates to his feeling grief, pain, and sorrow.

[16:09] He experiences anger, wrath, and jealousy. Delights in justice and righteousness and obedience. Again, our God is a person. And experiences emotion with perfect intensity.

Alright, so God is a person. But he is a person who is majestic. Think of someone who is great. Maybe it's a sports figure like Kobe Bryant.

Maybe it's an actor. But most likely when we think of someone with the word majestic attached to it, our search is going to narrow to political leaders. Even within the political realm, there doesn't seem to be any world leader who brings justice to this word.

But if we limit our thinking of the word majesty to simply exceeding greatness, then we see that the more power and control that one can wield, the more magnificent is their greatness.

So, if you think of the President of the United States, you think of how much power he wields. He is often called the greatest man in the world.

[17:24] Not necessarily anything because of his character, but it's because of the position he holds. It's a majestic position. So, as you keep thinking of more and more powerful scenarios, maybe we need to go back in our history and think of the times of kings.

And think of the great kingdoms. So, during those times, think of the greatest, most majestic person you can imagine, the Nebuchadnezzars of the world.

Could you just walk up to that person anytime you'd like? Can you just walk up to the President of the United States anytime you'd like? Well, never. Why?

Because the more majestic, the greater the person is, the greater their importance. By necessity, he becomes more isolated and unapproachable.

The more people one rules, the fewer percentage have access to his courts. Now think of our God.

[18:28] The only person in the universe who can rightly be called majestic. I believe one reason Packer began his discussion on the majesty of God, by reviewing God's personhood, is that by being reminded that our God is approachable, that he's intimate, that he's compassionate, that he's personal, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate, that he's compassionate.

Our God is a majestic God. Does not our esteem for a great person enlarge as we see him exhibiting true compassion, personable concern for his subjects, for those within his realm?

Our majestic God is also a personal God, who's deeply intimate toward us, his lowly creatures. So as we review a few aspects of God's majesty, consider them from this perspective of God's approachability, his personable personhood.

So how great is our God? Well, we're going to consider God's majesty under two main heads, his greatness demonstrated through his action and his greatness exhibited through his ability.

[19:51] First, his greatness demonstrated through his actions. And of course, these are by no means all-encompassing. First, as creator, he spoke a word and the whole universe was formed.

Some of us want to experience the exhilaration of seeing a tornado or riding out a hurricane. Can you imagine being present when he took and hurled the entire universe out with the word of his mouth, creating it out of nothing, to actually see this universe, this world being created?

Would that be an experience or what? That's our God. He created trillions upon trillions of stars instantly. And then consider something of the results of his creation.

What exquisite beauty. What profound order. What wondrous interdependency. Incomprehensible wisdom and complexity. How majestic is our God?

And again, let me remind you as we go through each of these points. Right there in your seat. Begin that discipline. You've heard these things. Now just whisper up a prayer to him of praise.

[21:14] Worship him. By reviewing back to him, it can be 10 seconds. How majestic you are, Lord. Because you did do this. Secondly, maybe something we wouldn't think of often as part of his majesty.

But the curse. Men often curse other men and events. We do it all the time. With little or no effect. There's an old saying.

Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me. That doesn't apply to God.

What happened when God cursed his creation? It resulted in physical death, pain, sorrow, suffering for every creature from the moment of the pronouncement until now.

When God says something that happens, he completely changed the created order. How majestic is our God?

How about the flood? Are you disturbed by the corruption and wickedness that's all around you? Do we not feel helpless to do anything about it?

[22 : 28] Or the little we can do seems like just a drop in the bucket on the grand scale of things? Well, God also witnesses the wickedness throughout the earth, and he burns with wrath as he sees it.

But unlike the greatest men on earth, he is able to do something about it. How great must one be to pull off the destruction of the whole earth through a worldwide flood?

I'm not sure what's more amazing. The meteorological, geological, astrological, and whatever other illogical coordination that went on for God to pull the flood off.

Or the fact that he moved in the wills of his creatures to cause them to board the ark two by two. Amazing feats. We read them and pass over them.

We can sit there and watch a tornado and be in awe. And we read these acts that our God has done and we're cold. Stop. Think about how great our God is.

[23 : 32] And then praise him. How about Babel? We once knew a man in the church in which I grew up who could speak seven languages. We talk of great scholars who have mastered the subtleties of linguistics, who have translated scriptures into other languages.

Now consider our God. He conceived of, he invented, every language known to man all at the same time.

And then he selectively changed the tongues of entire families so as to spread those families out through the face of the earth. How majestic is our God? Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodom and Gomorrah. God is great because he's both powerful and righteous. As a preconceived act of judgment, he selectively unleashes the powers of nature to utterly destroy the great cities of the plain with burning sulfur.

We must be careful just as Jesus warned us and corrected his disciples to not assume that when tragedy and trials strike or befall a person or a people, that God is judging their sin necessarily.

[24 : 48] But it's also likewise foolish to not recognize that God as judge of all the earth will do right. And the omnipotent one has unlimited resources to bring about his judgments, not only through eternal torments in hell, but also via divine acts of justice in the world.

He is just and he does have the power to accomplish that justice. Is there another person in all the universe who is perfectly just while possessing the omnipotence to bring about that justice at the perfect moment according to perfect wisdom?

So just how majestic is our God? His greatness exhibited through his ability. That's our second main head. His greatness exhibited through his ability.

This is more about who God is, which enables him to do these great works or acts. First, his omnipresence. Our problem of reaching just the right decisions is knowing all the facts.

There is so much that goes on in secret that no one knows about. There's no witnesses. But of course our God is not bound by any such limitations, is he? Jeremiah 23, 24, Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?

[26 : 12] When Cain murdered Abel, God saw it even though no one else was around. When Hagar fled Sarai and was hiding alone in the desert. The Lord came and he spoke to her.

He knew where she was. Lest someone might venture to think he can somehow still hide from God. Daniel states, He knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with him.

Daniel 2, 22. Or the psalmist, Psalm 139, 7. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast. Even when we are able to catch an act on camera, and a witness or a witness is present, so much loving of a just penalty is dependent upon knowing the motives of the person's heart.

But again, this isn't a concern for our God. 1 Corinthians 4, 5. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness, and will expose the motives of men's hearts.

[27 : 31] How can he do that? Why? Because nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account.

Hebrews 4, 13. And the Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise, in their own eyes, wise, are futile. 1 Corinthians 3, 20.

Such knowledge. How majestic is our God. God's omnipresence and his omniscience are closely linked. His being everywhere and his knowing everything.

Omniscience is our next point of discussion. God does know all things because he's present everywhere, but we mustn't limit his knowledge of everything to simply the idea that he's present everywhere.

We can be present in a situation, but not understand what's going on in that situation. Again, not so with our God. His knowledge is tempered by perfect wisdom.

[28 : 38] He's not only an encyclopedia of knowledge of every detail of everything that's ever happened for all eternity. But he understands, he comprehends the events of those happenings.

There was a silly movie a few years ago called, I believe, the computer that wore tennis shoes. And the whole premise of it was this college student, during a lightning storm, trying to fix this broken wire going to the computer, was holding onto the wire and lightning struck, and all the information of the internet came into his brain.

And he instantly knew everything. Now what was remarkably silly about that movie was, not only did he instantly know everything, he instantly knew how to apply everything. He instantly understood all the inner workings.

I can memorize a chapter in the Bible, and every single week read something, or go to a sermon and listen to something, and realize there is so much understanding I did not have in that chapter of the Bible.

To know facts and to understand are two different things, and our God is an understanding God because he's all-wise. Our God fully understands every aspect of all information, everywhere, all the time.

[30 : 04] By wisdom the Lord laid the foundations of the earth. By understanding he set the heavens in place. Great is our Lord and mighty in power, his understanding has no limit.

So what should be our response to such knowledge and understanding? Jeremiah 10, 7. Who should not revere you, O king of the nations? This is your due.

Among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you. Try to wrap your mind around this thought.

God knows the future as perfectly as he knows the present and the past. God knows the future because he lives in the future. God transcends time. Time is meaningless to him, such that he declares himself to be the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. His knowledge is perfect because he is over all. The third aspect of God's character we'll consider is his omnipotence. He's all-powerful.

[31 : 12] Please turn to Revelation 19. Perhaps nothing defines greatness more than raw power and capability.

It's probably one of the reasons, in spite of all of our corruption, that we could still accurately call ourselves a great nation. It's the awesome power of the storm that makes us stand before it in awe and wonder.

And the same God, I'm sorry, and the name God gives himself is El Shaddai, or God Almighty. We've already considered a number of God's actions that cause us to be dumbfounded by his power. Creation, the flood, Babel, even the curse. To these we could add the power that Jesus exercised.

As you think of him walking on the earth over sickness. And again, creating things, manipulating his creation, controlling Satan, and even conquering death.

[32 : 25] God's power is literally limitless. Consider the most mighty superheroes ever conceived by the minds of man.

Put them all together in allegiance. And our El Shaddai would vanquish them with a thought. Or don't imagine. Align all the nations together against our Lord.

But you, O Lord, laugh at them. You scoff at all the nations. Psalm 59.8 Let's throw in Satan and all the demons on the side of all the nations.

And we have the makings of a great battle. Revelation 19 describes just such a battle between Jesus and the forces of heaven. And against Satan and all the forces of evil in alliance with him. Look at verse 11 of Revelation 19. I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse who rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

[33:31] His eyes are like blazing fire and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and his name is the Word of God.

The armies of the heaven were following him riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Now jump down to verse 19. Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

But the beast was captured and with him the false prophet. Down to the end of the verse, the two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Kind of an anti-climatic finish, don't you think?

I mean the scene is set there for the clash of two titanic forces. The battle lines are drawn. Yet as quickly as the scene is laid, it's over.

There was no battle. The beast and the false prophet were captured. No details, no descriptions of the battles that ensued. Why the lack of information?

[34:43] Because there's no more information to give. There was no battle. Look at verse 21. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse.

And all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. Or look back at verse 15 and 16. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What's the imagery of the sword coming out of his mouth supposed to depict? Anyone? His word. Fighting words. Sword was used for battle. And here you have the scene. All the nations of the world. Satan before whom we tremble and feel so helpless.

[35:55] His legions of demons. All standing before our great God on his white horse. And behind him, well there's a little evening up.

He's got all the hosts of the heavens on his side. Did he use them? No, he just spoke. Just like he spoke. Just like he spoke. And the heavens were created.

Flung trillions and trillions of stars into space. Created the complexity we could never get our minds around. He just spoke a word. And it's over. It's done. How majestic is our God.

Let us worship him. Please turn to Isaiah 40, 25. Isaiah 40, 25. In this passage, Isaiah asks three questions.

To disillusioned and downcast Israelites. And we look at this in way of application. Very briefly. We're brought before our king.

[37:03] And we're being personally addressed by him. Each question is intended to rebuke some wrong aspect of our thinking. The first rebuke.

It's intended to correct wrong thoughts about God. Isaiah 40, 25. To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal, says the Holy One. Our thoughts about God are too small.

Luther said to Erasmus, Your thoughts of God are too human. But then secondly, he corrects our wrong thoughts about ourselves.

Look at verse 27. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, My way is hidden from the Lord. My cause is disregarded by my God. God has not abandoned us.

Packer comments, If you have been resigning yourself to the thought that God has left you high and dry, seek grace to be ashamed of yourself. Such unbelieving pessimism deeply dishonors our great God and Savior.

[38:10] Our great God and Savior. The third rebuke our Lord gives us is intended to correct slowness to believe in God's majesty. Verse 28.

Isaiah 40, 28. Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary.

And his understanding no one can fathom. It's only as we've considered and corrected our wrong thinking about God and his relationship to us that we can begin correcting our wrong attitudes.

Look at verse 29. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary and young men stumble and fall.

But those whose hope is in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

[39:16] It is my duty and my privilege to spend more time meditating on the majesty of God. And then applying the who and the what of God to my circumstances.

He is all-seeing. He sees the troubles and difficulties through which I am struggling. He is all-knowing. He not only sees everything that is happening in my life, but he knows every detail and every circumstance surrounding those events.

He is all-wise. He not only knows about what is going on in my life, he knows what is best for me and how to manipulate all the happenings of my life and everyone and everything around me for my good.

He is almighty. Knowing the ideal set of circumstances would be for me, he has the power to bring them about.

He has the power to bring about the circumstances he deems as best and wise for me. He is sovereign. His will is sovereign. His will is sovereign, meaning he not only has the power to level his enemies, but he doesn't have to.

[40 : 31] He can manipulate them. He can even manipulate the events of nature. He can even move the very thoughts and desires of men and angels to do his will. We saw him doing it with Satan himself, with Job.

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He directs it like a water course wherever he pleases. As I apply the who and what of God to my circumstances, I am then encouraged to hope and wait for him to accomplish his divine and good purposes in my life, which will result in renewed strength and in zeal.

Isaiah 40, 31. Let us go forth from here and worship and praise and honor and extol our God. Amen.