

OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD**1 Kings 8:22-53; 1 Timothy 1:12-17****(Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17)**

Intro: I do a lot of gasping when I'm walking through the woods, or through a rose garden, or look out at my hibiscus on my back deck. I do a lot of exclaiming when I'm driving through our beautiful country. On a regular basis I am blown away by the creativity of our amazing God. Kathy has to remind me on a regular basis to keep my eyes on the road on winding mountain roads so that we don't go over a thousands of feet drop-off as I gawk at the wonder of creation.

So, if you're like me, it's probably a no-brainer for me to ask, if, when we sing *OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD*, do we really know what that means? The Psalmist says *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD*. Psalm 150:6. Maybe he was like me and regular felt breathless at the wonder of God.

But, just in cast, let me ask why we are to praise the Lord? I think we all know the answer, but we regularly need to be reminded that when we do, it causes us to know how truly worthy of worship and praise our God is. And our God is not an awesome God just because he is Creator and Sustainer of the universe, but also because he is a God of grace and mercy. Let's look at that a bit today by bouncing back and forth from our 1 Kings text and the 1 Timothy passage I just read. First . . .

Our Awesome God is beyond compare

- Earlier in the service, Chris read Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple. He begins with an acknowledgement of what every living thing will sooner or later realize, *There is no God like you in heaven above or in earth below*. . . 1 Kings 8:23. Now think about that, heaven above and earth below is pretty inclusive – there's not much more than that – get the picture? And then he goes further:
 - God's love never fails and is especially evident in the lives of his obedient servants. When we acknowledge God, his love will shine through us.
 - And God keeps his promises – what he says – he will do – count on it. That's the beauty in the promise of my favorite benediction – *May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it*. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.
 - Do you ponder the greatness of God? What are your thoughts when you first see a newly born child? I hope is awe, wonder, and praise. And do the song writers really mean what they say when they write *O Lord you're beautiful, your face is all I see* or *I could sing of your love forever*. I believe they do. We can too. By looking for what God can and does do in creation and in our lives. Let's not be so distracted that we miss the wonder of what God is up to.
 - But maybe you're not there. Maybe you're just no feelin' it. I often remember Rob Douglass leading us in a particularly worshipful song and he stopped right in the middle of it and asked if we ever felt like we were lying when we sang songs that extolled worship but we weren't very worshipful inside? He assured us that it's not lying. Instead it's obedience. Obedience is worshiping when the feeling isn't there. Our love and worship for God is like our love for our spouse – it's a feeling, but more than that it's an action. Feelings can wax and wane, but love in action is what carries us from the valleys to the mountain tops. When we sing worship songs here on Sunday sing them until you feel them. God's love will come through in the hearts of his obedient kids.
 - Other ways we can do this is preparation.
 - Meditate on his Word. It's infinitely difficult to worship here on a Sunday morning when we have to reacquaint ourselves with God every time. The remedy for that is to spend time in his word each day.
 - And pray – Get to know your God. Spend time in in communication with hi.
 - He will hear you. In our text, Solomon lays out his requests before God because he knows God will act. You do it too.
 - Such intimacy would be difficult except that . . .

Our awesome God dwells among us

- King Solomon marvels almost incredulously, *But will God really dwell on earth?* 1 Kings 8:27a. No doubt there were naysayers who were questioning the opulent temple Solomon was dedicating – like Judas who

questioned Mary's extravagant gift of anointing Jesus with wildly expensive perfume. But, even he was having trouble with it himself as he answers his own question with, *The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less the temple I have built!* 1 Kings 8:27b.

- Yet God *did* dwell in that place – not because he had to, but because he wanted to. And He dwells with us too. Because he wants to! That's why he came to live and walk among us. Paul refers to that in the 1 Timothy passage I just read a bit ago where he says, *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . .* 1 Timothy 1:15b. And when he had saved sinners he sent his Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which by the way, IS TODAY! God dwells among us by his Spirit. He is present among us as he promised. He keeps his promises.
- And here is another promise, back to Solomon . . .

Our awesome God overlooks our past

- In verses 31-34, Solomon cries out for justice, he cries out for relief when hardship strikes, he asks for protection from enemies, but most of all Solomon desires forgiveness. He knows himself and, and even though he's king and known to be the wisest man who ever lived, he more than anyone, knows his own failings and weaknesses and he knows that he's no different from every other human being. Solomon knows we need to be forgiven. He wouldn't ask if he knew it was futile, and Solomon knows something about this awesome God: he knows that God is a forgiving God and so he requests God's assistance both now and in the future. In a way he is saying, Lord, we're going to fail you, get ready; we're going to need forgiveness.
- Paul knew this too – he experienced God's forgiveness and then his appointment to ministry even though he . . . *was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man* 1 Timothy 1:13, so much so that he considered himself the worst sinner (v 15). But God used him in ministry because he overlooks our past when we confess it and repent of it. That's the key – repentance. After all, what good would our repentance be if we just repeat our sin? We need to do our part.
- But this is only possible because . . .

Our awesome God is abundant in grace

- Of course Solomon knew this – he knew the history of the people of Israel. He knew the cycle of obedience – failure – bondage – repentance – forgiveness – obedience that his people had lived through and he knew his own limitations.
- But it doesn't have to be a continuing cycle! Jesus came so that we can have victory and it available because of his abundant grace. Paul tells us it was *poured out on us*. (1 Timothy 1:14). Here's the point: don't take that free and abundant grace for granted, apply it to living for and serving Christ as his ambassadors in a world that is locked in a cycle of despair and hopelessness.
- And finally, and fortunately for us . . .

Our awesome God is unlimited in patience

- Solomon called upon God for future help because he knew God is patient. He knew God's forbearance in the past. He saw the immense blessing of the present and he was banking on the promise of the future. Listen to the blessing prayed over his people: *Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors. And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other. And may your hearts be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time.* 1 Kings 8:56-61
- And Paul knew God's patience firsthand even though he had been the most virulent persecutor of the church. And in gratefulness he proclaims, *But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.* 1 Timothy 1:16.

- Indeed God is patient – but you need to remember this – you can play with his abundant grace and take a chance on getting his forgiveness later, but his patience expires when you breathe your last. Actually, that’s the only limitation to God’s limitless grace – it doesn’t extend into the grave of an unrepentant sinner.

Conclusion: So, don’t take a chance on that. Experience his grace now and you’ll enjoy and peace and joy that has no comparison. Experience our awesome God. Actually, to say God is an awesome God is a glaring understatement. Solomon attempts to put into words all that God is when he says *O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below.* 1 Kings 8:23, and Paul takes a stab at it with his doxology *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.* 1 Timothy 1:17. But truthfully, any words are inadequate when we consider all that God is. But, know what? God is just pleased when we attempt to put it into words. He is blessed by our feeble and honest attempts. He is satisfied when we acknowledge that we know, in our own finite way, that our God is an awesome God. Amen.