

The Omnipresent One

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald explores the concept of God's omnipresence, emphasizing its implications for comfort, recognition, and living a holy life.

Duration: 35:57

Scripture: Psalm 139:7-10, Jeremiah 23:23-24, Jonah 1:1-3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 18:20

Topics: "Omnipresent"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on various examples of individuals trying to escape from God's presence but ultimately finding that God is always waiting for them. The speaker mentions the story of Jonah trying to flee from the Lord by taking a ship to Tarsus, but failing to escape God's presence. Another example is given of a young Irishman who tried to escape God by fleeing to the United States, only to find God waiting for him at the dock in New York and subsequently converting to Christianity. The speaker also references Francis Thompson's poem, 'The Hound of Heaven,' which describes the relentless pursuit of God. The sermon emphasizes the miraculous nature of the human mind and the wisdom of God in the plan of salvation, highlighting the love of God demonstrated through giving, such as God giving His only begotten Son and Christ giving Himself for the church.

Transcript

Speaking about commentaries, we're just finishing the Old Testament commentary, and I would like to ask your prayers for translations. It's already being, the New Testament, that is, the New Testament is already being translated into German, and there's a lady in the Bay Area who would like to see it in Russian. She's selling a building in order that it might be translated and published in Russian.

That last week, I had a letter from Brazil, a sister there, a missionary's wife, asked permission to translate it into Portuguese. So, I'd like you to pray, if you ever think of it, that we might get into other languages. Anybody know what the language in the world that most people use more than any other? Chinese, Mandarin, and Cantonese, but mostly Mandarin.

I'm praying especially about Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic, because those are big portions of the world's population. I would appreciate your prayers if you think about it. These weeks here at Sun Valley, we've been thinking about the wonderful babe of Bethlehem, how that babe is God manifest in the flesh, and we've been thinking about some of the wonders of his person, how all the attributes of God are his.

Omnipotence, we were thinking about last week. Omniscience. And this morning, I just want to start off with the fact that the Lord Jesus is also omnipresent.

Omnipresent is the theologian's word for all present. That means that the marvelous Son of God is present in all places at one and the same time. Now, that raises a difficulty in the human mind, because how can he be lying in a manger in Bethlehem, in a stable, and still be present in all places? Yet, that's the truth of the matter.

The Bible has a lot of things that will stumble anybody who doesn't want to believe it. I've often thought about that. When God gave us the Word of God, he put things in it there that if a person doesn't want to believe the Bible, his mind will trip over those things.

But if you come to the Bible in faith, these things have no trouble. Paschal said once, the heart has its reasons that reason cannot know. That's true of faith, too.

Faith has its reasons that reason cannot know. I think the psalmist gave us one of the best descriptions of the omnipresence of the Lord in Psalm 139, verses 7 through 10. I'm going to read them to you.

Psalm 139, verses 7 through 10. He says, Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. And also in Jeremiah 23, verses 23 and 24, God said, Am I a god at hand, saith the Lord, and not a god afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? And then, of course, there's the promise of the Lord Jesus himself in Matthew 18, 20, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. These are just a few of the scriptures that teach that the Lord Jesus is present everywhere, at one and the same time.

He is ubiquitous. That means he's inescapable. However, that's not the same as pantheism.

Pantheism means that God is in everything, God is in that tree out there, therefore you bow down and you worship the tree. When we speak of the omnipresence of the Lord, it means that he's everywhere, and yet he's separate and distinct from his creation, and it's very, very important to make that distinction. God cannot be confined to any geographical location.

He's everywhere, and nobody can hide from his presence. An atheist once wrote on a wall, God is nowhere, and a little girl came along and put a space after the W, God is now here. That's the truth of the matter.

John Arrowsmith told of a heathen philosopher who asked, who asked, where is God? And the Christian answered, I would ask you, where is he not? Thomas Watson wrote, God's center is everywhere, his circumference is nowhere. Kind of blows your mind, doesn't it? God's center is everywhere, his circumference is nowhere. George Swinner added, God is neither shut up in nor shut out of any place.

And yet, although God is everywhere, the Lord Jesus Christ is present everywhere, he's not apparent everywhere. I think it was in Our Daily Bread this last week, where a little girl asked her father, Daddy, where is God? And he said, God is in heaven. She said, I wish he'd look out the window so we could see what he's like.

Well, of course he did. He did look out the window, said Bethlehem, didn't he? And in the person of the Lord Jesus, he revealed exactly what he's like. But in the Bible class this morning, Brother George was talking about the Book of Esther, and God's name never mentioned in the Book of Esther.

You'd think God wasn't there, but he was there just the same. As Lowell said, behind the dim unknown stands a God within the shadows, keeping watch above his own. And you and I have learned that in life that, oh, God is not apparent everywhere, he's everywhere.

And sometimes we can't see him for various reasons in life. I often think of Mary in the garden after the resurrection, and she's talking to a man, and she supposes him to be what? The gardener. It was actually the Lord Jesus, but she couldn't see him because of what? Because of her tears.

Sometimes the sorrows of life hinder us from seeing how very near the Lord Jesus is. At another time, the disciples are on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and a storm. The Lord comes to them on the water, and they supposed him to be a spirit.

It says in the New King James Version, they supposed him to be a ghost, but it was the Lord. They couldn't recognize him because of their fears. Oftentimes our fears hinder us from realizing how very near and present the Lord Jesus is.

And then the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and here the Lord Jesus comes and walks with them on the road to Emmaus. They didn't recognize him. Why didn't they recognize him? Because of their disappointment.

We supposed it was he who should have redeemed Israel, they said. Their hopes had been dead. And so you have those, at least those three times in the Gospels when the Lord Jesus was very, very near, and because of tears, because of fears, because of disappointment, he went unrecognized at the moment.

But whether we recognize him or not, the fact is he's always there. It's a tremendous comfort in all the changing circumstances of life. I'm sure that some of you, many of you, have had the experience that sometimes in the most trying experiences of life, you sense the nearness of the Lord in a way you never had before.

That's why David said, it's good for me that I have been afflicted, because oftentimes in the bitter experiences of life, Jesus himself draws near to us. The doctrine of the Lord Jesus' omnipresence cannot but affect our lives. If we really believe these things, they have to affect our lives.

For instance, it means that we can't hide from God. It means that our lives are an open book to God. I remember when we were kids, we used to sing a chorus.

He sees all we do. He hears all we say. My God is writing all the time.

Or words to that effect. Jonah tried to get away from the Lord by taking that ship to Tarsus. It didn't work.

A young Irishman tried to get away from the Lord by fleeing to the United States, and he found that the Lord was waiting for him at the dock there in New York. He was converted shortly afterwards. Francis Thompson wrote that poem, The Hound of Heaven.

I like it. He said, I fled him down the night and down the days. I fled him down the arches of the years.

I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind, and in the midst of tears I hid from him. At least he tried to hide from him, but like so many others, he found it was impossible. God was there when Thompson became exhausted with his flight.

That's a marvelous experience when we give up exhausted and the Lord draws near. But in addition to being a tremendous warning, the omnipresence of the Lord Jesus is a tremendous comfort to God's people. Never a burden that he does not carry.

Never a heartache that he does not fear. In all our afflictions, he is afflicted. When we're going through the waters, he's there with us.

When we're going through the fire, he's there with us. He never leaves us alone. I hear people asking, where was God when all those people were in the concentration camps? Of course, the answer is he was there too, suffering with his own people.

And it's true in all of the experiences of life. And certainly the truth of the omnipresence of the Lord should be a motivation to me to live in holiness. He's there in the darkness of night.

He's there when no human eye can see. He's there when I'm away from home and loved ones. And whatever I do, I should ask myself the question, how does it look in his presence? Because that's the true test for all conduct.

So that little babe in the Bethlehem manger, although he was there, he was omnipresent at the same time. And as a man on earth, he could say, the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father. He's here on earth, the only begotten Son, and yet at the same time he's in the bosom of the Father.

And not only was he in all places at one and the same time, but he is the very embodiment of wisdom. That's one of the attributes of God, wisdom. And we want to think about that for a few minutes.

Wonderful attribute of the Lord Jesus is his wisdom. It's connected with his knowledge, but it's not exactly the same. His knowledge means that he knows everything.

There's nothing he doesn't know, he can't learn, because he already knows. His wisdom is how he always achieves the best possible result by the best possible means. Now, you and I can have a lot of knowledge.

We can learn the sciences and all the rest, and yet we might be dodos as far as wisdom is concerned, you know. A lot of people with advanced degrees really don't know the practicalities of life. There's that difference between knowledge and wisdom.

The Lord Jesus is infinitely wise, and he can use his knowledge to produce the best possible results by the best possible means. The wisdom of the Lord Jesus is his perfect judgment and his infallible insight. Let me read you some scriptures that deal with this.

With him is wisdom and strength. He has counsel and understanding. With him is strength and wisdom.

The deceived and the deceiver are his. The psalmist says, O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches.

Solomon, in Proverbs, the Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth. By understanding has he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

And Paul bursts out, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! We see the wisdom of the Lord Jesus in the creation, in the physical, natural creation, but we only see traces of it, because there's so much in creation that no human mind has ever been able to fathom. Somebody said this, and I think this is a marvelous thing. It was a scientific journal.

It says that the universe is so finely tuned that the chances of this happening by chance, of this universe coming into being by chance, would be similar to taking a microscopic dart and flinging it to the fathermost quasar out in the universe and hitting a bull's eye one millimeter in diameter. Now, I don't know if your mind can take that in. Not even.

But the chances of the universe happening by chance are similar to taking a dart, flinging it out into outer space to the fathermost quasar, and hitting a bull's eye a millimeter in diameter. The human body is a masterpiece of divine wisdom. It's really asking man too much to ask him to believe that it happened by chance.

The brain, for instance, has been called an enchanted loom. It's able to take the shifting electric signals from 252 million rods and cones in your eyes moment by moment, and weave these tiny snippets of information into a tapestry portrait of what's before you. 250 million rods and cones in your eyes.

And the human brain is able to take what those eyes see and weave it into a tapestry of what is before you. The DNA, which is the basis of heredity, is so narrow and compacted that all the genes in the human body could be placed in about the size of an ice cube. And yet, if you took those genes and unraveled them, the DNA, and unraveled them, the length in a single human body, the length of all the unraveled DNAs, would go to the sun and back 400 times.

It all happened by evolution, you tell me. Think of the miracle of the human mind. No wonder it's asked in the book of Job, who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or who has given understanding to the mind? I like that.

Who has given understanding to the mind? And yet, that babe in Bethlehem is the one who created it all. There's the miracle of the spirit by which man can have fellowship with God. In prayer, for instance, man can leave this earth and by faith ascend into heaven to the throne room of the universe and converse with the king.

And I think certainly we see the wisdom of the Lord Jesus in the whole plan of salvation, don't we? And how closely that comes home to us. Paul reminds us, since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believed. And Paul says in that same epistle, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

God in his wisdom did not choose the mighty and the great people of this earth, but he chose the poor and the weak and the base and the despised and the things that are not to bring to naught the things that are no flesh should glory in his presence. Marvelous, isn't it? God chose almost non-persons to reveal the glories of his own person and of his marvelous way of salvation. All about us declares the wisdom of God.

All his works express his wisdom. And that means that he can never make a mistake. We often say that.

We say he's too loving to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake. What confidence this gives us in the Lord. No matter what happens to be in life, it wasn't an error.

It wasn't an accident. I mean, we use that word accident. But for the child of God, there's no accident.

For the child of God, there's no error. And we would plan our lives exactly the way the Lord has planned them if we had his wisdom. I'm not speaking about foolish mistakes I make myself.

I'm not speaking about sins that I commit. But as far as the overall plan of my life, if I knew what he knows, had his wisdom, I would plan it exactly the same way. That makes me a worshiper of the Lord.

It means that the Lord's guidance is the best. His wisdom. How foolish for me to plan my own life.

How foolish for me to choose the way that I'm going to go when I have his wisdom to draw on. And when I can say with the psalmist, as for God, his way is perfect. He knows options that I don't know anything about.

I might plan my life and think, if I could just achieve this, it would be satisfaction in life. But there might be something much better that God knows about that I don't know about. And so I can trust his leading.

I don't have to take matters in my own hands. Let him choose the path for me. It's true that we will never be as wise as the Lord Jesus is.

We'll never have that attribute of God to the same extent that he does. But it's wonderful that we can draw on his resources and exhibit wisdom in our everyday lives. In fact, we're told to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

We should be characterized by the wisdom that's above, a wisdom that's pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated. Do you ever think of all the troubles we could avoid in life if we just had the wisdom to go by the word of God? Most of the problems that we have in life are the result of disobedience to the word of God. Not all.

Most of the problems we have in life. We can bring down a flood of unhappiness upon ourselves by just neglecting the scriptures. If I'm really going to use the wisdom of God, these things will be characteristic of my life.

I will not judge by outward appearance. I will judge righteous judgment. I would far rather have the praise of God than the praise of men.

If I'm going to be wise as God is wise, I will look upon the things that men esteem as abominations, because that's what it says. It says that the things that men esteem are abomination in the sight of God. If I'm going to use God's wisdom, I will find safety in a multitude of counselors.

When I have great decisions to be made, I'll go and check with other people, other Christians, spiritually minded Christians, for advice. If I'm going to have the wisdom of the Lord, I will find peace in accepting things that can't be changed. And there are things in life.

There are things in life that just can't be changed, and I can pray three times that this thorn in the flesh might be taken from me, but nothing happens. There's peace in acceptance. In these and countless other ways, a believer manifests himself as a person of wisdom.

And I guess the pearl of all of the perfections of the Lord Jesus is his love. Don't you think so? He's omnipresent, he's wise, but he's love. What is his love? Well, it's his tender affection for others and his deep concern for their good.

I say this is the pearl of all of the perfections of God. It involves a strong emotional attachment and a commitment that manifests itself in giving. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.

Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. It's almost impossible to think of love without bringing the attitude of giving into it. Now, when we read that God is love, that's not a definition of God, it's a description of God.

A lot of people take it as a definition of God. It's not a definition. We don't worship love, we worship God who is love, and love is one of the descriptions of him.

Packer defines God's love as an exercise of his goodness toward individual sinners whereby, having identified himself with their welfare, he's given his son to be their savior and now brings them to know and enjoy him in a covenant relationship. The love of the Lord Jesus is an eternal love. It never had a beginning and it never had an end.

It's an immeasurable love. Nobody can ever fathom the length of the breadth or the height of the depth of that love. It's an unselfish love.

Don't think about himself. He went all the way to Calvary because he loved us. So, it's an extravagant love.

He didn't have to love us as much as he loved them. He wasn't satisfied just to save us from hell. He will never be fully satisfied.

His love will never be fully satisfied until he has his people home with himself in heaven. A couple of weeks ago, we were talking about some of the things that God cannot do. Although he's omnipotent, there are certain things he can't do.

Let me give you another one to add to your list. God, the Lord Jesus, God himself cannot love you more than he loves you right now if you belong to him. I think that's wonderful.

It's true. The Lord Jesus cannot love you more than he loves you at this very minute. He demonstrated the extent of his love by going to the cross and dying for us.

The love of God's a subject that can never be exhausted, and no mind will ever be able to fully take it in. You say, well, why did he love you? The Bible doesn't answer that. It just says, I've loved you because I have loved you.

The poet was right when he said that if all of the oceans were inked and the sky was just one enormous stretch of parchment, and every blade of grass was a pen, and every man was a writer, to write the love of God above would drain the oceans dry, nor would the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky. I think that puts it very succinctly. It's because he loves us that we think of the Lord Jesus as our friend.

Do you ever stop to think how many hymns have been written about the friendship of Jesus, the friend who sticks closer than a brother? Think of all the hymns that have been written about the love of the Lord

Jesus, the books that have been written as well. It's just too much for the human mind to take in. But I tell you, no subject should awaken such great thoughts of worship in our hearts that we, insignificant as we are, when you think of the extent of the universe, and you think of this planet on which we live, and you think of each one of us, they're so insignificant.

And yet, the Lord loves each one of us with a love that cannot be told. It's amazing that that love still goes on. And he knew all about us before.

From eternity past, he knew all about us, and he loved us just the same, didn't he? That's marvelous. Shall we worship him for it? Father, we thank you today for the babe of Bethlehem, and for all the perfections that are enshrined in him. We think of his omnipresence, how he could be there as a helpless little child, and yet fill the universe.

Yet, we know it's true. We know that he's near today to his people, especially those who are going through trials and difficulties and sorrows at this time of year in a special way. Thank you that he's near to his people out there in Desert Shield in the Middle East.

Wherever they're facing danger, he's there controlling every missile, everything in the universe. Thank you for his wisdom, and we see it expressed in the natural creation and in the spiritual creation as well. And we just bow low and worship.

We thank you most of all today for that love, the love that brought him down to Bethlehem, led him on through life as a stranger in the world his hands have made. Took him to Gabbatha, Gethsemane, and finally to Golgotha, where he, the incarnate Son of God, poured out his life for us that we might live eternally. We can truly say this morning, oh, it was love, it was wondrous love.

The love of God to me, it brought my Savior from above to die on Calvin. This Christmas time, we pray, blessed God, that we might not be distracted from all of the excellencies, all the wonders that are found in his glorious person. We pray that we might truly have a Christ-filled and Christ-centered Christmas.

We ask in his worthy name.

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