

**NOTES FROM STEPHEN TIBBERT'S SERMON- 21st April 2024 am**  
**TITLE: "God's character and mission" TEXT: Psalm 34**  
**SERIES: More on mission part 2**  
**Scripture references from the ESV**

**Psalm 34** I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

<sup>2</sup> My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.

<sup>3</sup> Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

<sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

<sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

<sup>6</sup> This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

<sup>8</sup> Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

<sup>9</sup> Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

<sup>10</sup> The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

<sup>11</sup> Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?

<sup>13</sup> Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.

<sup>14</sup> Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

<sup>16</sup> The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

<sup>17</sup> When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

<sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

<sup>20</sup> He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.

<sup>21</sup> Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

<sup>22</sup> The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

David, in this Psalm, calls us to taste and see what a wonderful God we have, but what is he like? What attributes of God come to mind when you think of your heavenly Father? David tells us:

- God is good (v8)

- He is attentive to the cries of the righteous (v15). He is a God who is there with us, listening.
- He is near to the broken-hearted, and saves those who are crushed in Spirit(v18). He is there in our deepest need
- He is a redeeming God (v22) – he rescues people

Take time to reread the whole Psalm and identify other characteristics of God. The wonderful truths about him will lead you into praise, just as they did for David (vv1-3). He is someone who truly experienced God.

*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us – A W Tozer (Knowledge of the Holy).* It affects every area of our lives. Other characteristics of God may come to mind, like those below.

Ask yourself how the reality of God affects how you think, and once affected by that reality how does it change you? What difference does it make?

- God is omniscient: God knows
- God is omnipresent: God is with me
- God is omnipotent: God is in control
- God is holy: God is pure, perfect in every way. There is none like him.
- God is love: what joy to know you are loved by your creator
- God is just: God always does what is right
- God is gracious: what peace to know God's mercy to you a sinner

When you say of God that he is love, that will have a profound impact on you. What a joy it is to know that he has

forgiven you not because you met some standard but out of his love and grace, even though his holiness demands justice. The knowledge of his gracious gift of salvation on the cross touches our hearts and changes our lives. You can know that he is with you and he knows all that is happening to you, because all that comes to you comes from the hand of the loving Father. Truly knowing who God is impacts how you live.

- When someone is struggling, that struggle can be tracked back to something they **don't** believe about God.

- Do I believe that God is love and that he is in control despite what is happening to me? Then my fears are groundless. Am I discontented? Then I do not believe that God is giving me all I need.

There are two less obvious attributes of God that directly affect any missionary endeavour. The first has an impact on methodology, and the second on motivation.

1. **God is a communicating God.** Have you ever wondered what language God speaks? Each one of us came to the Lord through the preaching of the word in a language we know because God meets us where we are. There are two kinds of revelation of God:

- a) General revelation (God has made himself known in creation): **The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. <sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. <sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Ps 19:1-4)**
- b) Special revelation (God has given us his Word): **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:1-3)**

Everything we do, including mission, flows out of what God is like.

- If God has revealed himself and communicates with man, what kind of communicator is he?

Since it is his nature to be a good communicator, this has implications for his people as his ambassadors. We must take on board that, for God, language is an accommodation. When he chose to reveal himself to us, he did so in a way that we could connect with. The Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek with a little Aramaic, because those were the languages were spoken by the people to whom he was revealing himself.

**God accommodates himself to speak in a way his audience will understand.**

God's thoughts existed long before there was language, but God chose the language of people to express those thoughts. Jesus himself is the Word of God: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4)**

**The Word came down into our reality and chose to reveal himself.**

**When he speaks, he does so in a way that people can understand what he is saying. One of our basic Christian convictions is that God is light; in Him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5) That is to say, it is as much the nature of God to reveal himself as it is the nature of light to shine. Now God has revealed himself chiefly by speaking. We may be quite sure, therefore, that He has spoken in order to be understood, and that He has intended Scripture (the record of the divine speech) to be plain to its readers. For the whole purpose of revelation is clarity not confusion, a readily intelligible message, not a set of dark and mysterious riddles. (John Stott).**

Jesus is twice described by John as being full of grace and truth. When Jesus dealt with people, he was gracious, giving them what they most needed but did not deserve. Our ministry, too, needs to be full of grace and truth.

### **God is a communicating God**

**2. The Lord is beautiful.** God is good! He is wonderful! He is full of splendour! He is altogether lovely! In his character and in every way: *The Lord in all his perfection is truly that which he seems to be, that which we say he is.* (Dane Ortlund).

How would you define beauty, and not the superficial beauty that the world suggests to us? It is almost intangible – perfect balance, equilibrium, proportionality, perfection, loveliness. It is something that is pleasurable to observe and brings joy, causing a positive reaction in the observer. It is a combination of parts which contrast yet are in symmetry.

David found the Lord to be beautiful, and wanted to spend time just contemplating that beauty:

- Ps 27:4 **One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.**
- Ps 96:6 **Splendour and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**
- Ps 96:9 **Worship the LORD in the splendour (beauty NKJV) of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!**

God has given himself to us in all his beauty and the sight of Christ is beyond price. Isaiah tells us (53:2b): **he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.** Yet when we consider the person of Christ as revealed on the pages of the New Testament, we see the beautiful complexity of God revealed as man.

- **Hebrews 1:1-3** – quoted above (point 1:b)
- **Colossians 1** shows us the supremacy of Christ in creation and salvation
- **Philippians 2** shows the loving caring heart of Jesus
- The gospel accounts resound with his compassion, his power, his integrity, his authority, his love, his purpose, his determination, his humility, calming the seas, calming the frightened, healing people, casting out demons.

### **The Lord is truly beautiful and there is none like him**

How do these two characteristics of God affect the efforts of the church to be obedient to the great commission?

Why do those on cross-cultural mission spend so much time and effort on learning the language and understanding the culture? They have a conviction that God is a God who communicates and so they understand the need to overcome language and cultural barriers which can distort the message.

**God is a good communicator:** Do we reflect this attribute of God in the ministry? If not, two errors can occur.

a. **We take the attitude that communication (and understanding) is not our responsibility.** We are content to have done our duty in taking the message, but do not realise that we have failed to communicate.

b. **As a result of the first error, people understand something different from what we meant to communicate**

This can have serious results.

- We must reflect the character of God in communicating truth in a way that people can engage with it, hear it and understand it as the Spirit applies it to their minds.

**Our responsibility is to make sure the message is clear.**

**God's responsibility is to apply it to the mind and touch the heart of those who hear it.**

**The Lord is beautiful:** What greater motivation can we have? Do you find the Lord to be beautiful in:

- his works, in creation, in forming you, in his plans for you
- your salvation
- your need and desperation
- your pain, suffering and confusion
- your joy
- his holiness, his set-apartness, his uniqueness, his exclusivity matchlessness and exceptionality

Ask yourself if you see him that way.

How different your motivation becomes when you are captivated by the beauty of the Lord! Then you can say to people: I have found something of great worth - let me share him with you. He has become my all, and is worth giving everything up for.

We are not inviting people to join a religious system which will oblige them to follow a list of rules. Instead, we invite them to come:

**Taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.**

**God is a God who communicates.**

Let us tell the world how beautiful he is.