Omnipresent: The God Who Is Here, There, and Everywhere

Text: Psalm 139.7-12, selected texts
Theme: The God who is everywhere present will never leave or forsake us

Introduction — I chaired ordination council this past Tuesday
- process whereby the EFCA and local church recognizes God's call upon a man for ministry
- he takes the EFCA Statement of Faith and expounds it with Scripture
- writes a paper, about 35-45 pages in length on all that the Statement of Faith contains
- then, for 5 hours or so, six pastors and six laymen ask him questions about what he believes
- when it is all said and done, we'll recommend him for ordination
- this past one was quite enjoyable, the young man handling the Word exceedingly well
- always reminded, having done over 20 of these over 25 years now, of my own 34 years ago

Why is this important?
- and why would I tell you about it?
- because the state of the American church is in a shambles, crumbling from within
- the UMC, just this week, removed the ban upon same-sex marriages among its clergy
- how could this happen with such historically sound beginnings?
- because the gatekeepers of God's Holy Word no longer believed this book was just that
- Did God really say…? they ask; and then they answer, "No, He did not; we don't believe it."

Doctrine, while at times sounding droll to many of you, is of utmost importance
- **"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3 ESV)**
- Jude knew the great need to hold the Word aloft for all
- historically, this has always been the case
- it's why we have creeds and confessions which ground us, hold us, teach us
- it's why we need ordination councils, to test the mettle and doctrine of Free Church pastors

R.C. Sproul once said the greatest weakness of the American Evangelical is…
- they don't know God
- without a foundation of knowing God, the church will fall…and I believe it is so today
- we must know God as God has made Himself known
- and so, we consider these attributes of God
- God is infinite, incomprehensible, self-sufficient and immutable
- this morning, we will consider the truth that God is omnipresent

That God is everywhere present means that He is…

I. Immanent & Transcendent

- I can't be in two places at the same time!
- often a cry of a frustrated parent trying to coordinate schedules that have become far too full
- maybe you've visited the four-corners of America
- Arizona, Utah, Colorado & New Mexico borders meet
- you can try a Twister move to be in four states at the same time
- problem is, it really is only part of you that is in each state

1. God is fully present everywhere at all times

- the theological term for this is God's immanence
- God is indeed everywhere; there is no place that God is not
- but He is also there in the past, present, and the future
- so, put simply, there is no place—or time—where God is not
- practically applied, think of it like this
- when visiting Israel in 2009, I kept over 2,500 pictures from our trip
- if I want to go back in time via my memory, I can pull those up on my computer
- Ann kept a journal of our time there also, so she could "go back" as it were
- but God does not need a journal or a photo album
- He is here, He is fully present here
- but at the very same time, He is fully present in worlds unknown that only the Hubble Telescope might see

2. He is near

- this also means that He is near you and me
- since He can be fully present anywhere at anytime, He is here and He is near
- when God says that He will never leave you or forsake you, it is a sure promise
- certainty of this is because of who He is, not just what He can do
- His very nature is immanent, therefore He is always present with you

3. God is above all things: He is transcendent

- God may fill creation with His omnipresence, but He is also different than that creation
- He is not His creation
- pantheism says that God is in everything
- if true, then parts of you and trees and mountains are God also, small pieces of deity
- it's a very silly notion: we are we and He is He
- if we had parts of God in us, then not only is God divided…
- …but we would be deserving of worship as well
- the God of Scripture is in and around all things, but distinct from all things

And so…

II. GOD IS…

- God is everywhere fully present
- but we are not always aware of this
- **"Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." (Genesis 28:16 ESV)**
- but it changes nothing in God
- **"Yet he is actually not far from each one of us…" (Acts 17:27 ESV)**
- perhaps there are times when we sense His love in greater ways
- at other times, we may be very much aware of His provision for us
- you study some part of God's Word and you come under great conviction of God's holiness
- but no matter what we sense or feel, God simply is omnipresent
- He is even present in hell and will be for all eternity
- the inhabitants there will only sense His great wrath for eternity, but God will be there
- for all who trust Jesus Christ by grace through faith, they will know His wonderful presence
- our awareness and comprehension will be to the fullest of our capacity as His creatures

1. He is immense

• infinite: no limits, no boundaries, immeasurable, and inexhaustible
• we can speak of this as God's immensity: God transcends all spatial limitations
• He cannot be contained or isolated to one particular local point
• He is omnipresent, meaning, He is everywhere present in the world
• His immensity means He is not limited to or confined by this world
• so we really can't speak of God as having size
• size is a measurable thing and God is immeasurable
• you and I are bound by space and time
• no matter what your mother says, she cannot be in more than one place at a time

2. The witness of Scripture

• "Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:24)

• "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27)

• "But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him?" (2 Chronicles 2:6)

• "Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?" (Isaiah 66:1)

3. He is always, at all times everywhere present

• God is omnipresent
• He is here, there, and everywhere present even while He acts
• Deists: God influences and exercises power in the world
• but at same time believe He is not present in our world with us
• God does not use drones or remotes or distance robots to do His work
• He is present where He works
• God cannot be divided, separated, even in His attention to people and events
• the whole of God's being is always everywhere, no more less or more here than there
• and so, God is always present, no matter what

Yet it is not simply God the Father we speak of, for we know that…

III. CHRIST IS IMMANUEL

• great hope starts the New Testament record
• for 450 years, God was silent, not speaking through a prophet
• but His promises remained and came about in the One who is the final Amen to them
• this did not appear in form of a temple, an ark, or even a select leader like Moses
• it took place as God stepped down out of heaven
• He took upon Himself the form of a man, a servant, obedient unto death

1. He dwelt among us

• "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (John 1:1-2 ESV)

• this is one of the greatest truths in all of Scripture

- the eternal, divine Word existed, and yet takes on flesh
- **"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14 ESV)**
- Moses asked to see God's glory and could not
- yet John, and the other Apostles did
- jaw-dropping truth: Deity dwelling with humanity
- why would God do such a thing?
- Jesus, as described here in John 1.14 is **"full of grace and truth"**
- **"For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." (John 1:16 ESV)**
- from that grace, we have received grace
- in this grace of Jesus Christ is redemption, reconciliation with God the Father
- God is with us in His Son, Jesus Christ
- **"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"**
- (which means, God with us)." (Matthew 1:23 ESV)

2. He dwells within us

- we know that God took on flesh: Jesus, fully God, became fully man
- He is Immanuel: God with us
- but He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead
- then He ascended into heaven, so how is God still with us?
- Jesus disciples wanted to know this as well: Jesus, You're not really leaving us, right?
- Jesus gave a tremendous promise to them…and to you and me, if we'd only believe
- **"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17 ESV)**
- Jesus would not leave believers as orphans—the Spirit of God comes
- this promise was fulfilled at Pentecost
- and now, for all who believe, we have Christ in us through the Spirit
- we are temples of God
- **"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own," (1 Corinthians 6:19 ESV)**
- we are indwell by God the Spirit
- **"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you." (Romans 8:9 ESV)**
- oh, that I had the time to talk about the outworking of this glory
- the Spirit of God within us—God is present and very near

Allow me to touch on it every so briefly…

IV. So, What Does This Mean for Me?

- we must always see the practical application in doctrine
- it leads us to that, as well as to doxology—giving praise to God
- so let's consider what this means, that God is present at all times everywhere

1. For unbelievers: little to no comfort

- you think you have the strength to justify your own sin: you do not
- you are not convinced that God knows all things and is present everywhere
- this means you believe that you have secrets from Almighty God

- there are lusts in your heart, envy in your heart, hatred in your affections, covetousness in your mind
- to think that you can conceal thoughts, motives, words or actions from God is the epitome of foolishness
- **"O Lord, you have searched me and known me!**
  You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.
  You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.
  Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether."
  (Psalm 139:1-4 ESV)

2. A consolation

- if this frightens the wicked, it should console the righteous
- no matter what the trial
- no matter where it occurs
- no matter how swift comes the bad news
- no matter the depths of its power
- God is ever with us
- **"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4 ESV)**

3. Omnipresence motivates us to holiness and purity as well

- why would you sin against the God who loves you?
- why would you think for one moment that He wasn't present with you?
- **"I keep your precepts and testimonies, for all my ways are before you." (Psalm 119:168)**
- why did David keeps God's testimonies
- because all his ways were before God
- [a] **"Does not he see my ways and number all my steps?" (Job 31:4 ESV)**
- God is always with and knows me

4. Knowledge of God's presence should make us vigilant against sin

- most of us remember when we were kids and there were cookies stashed somewhere
- we'd been told to stay out of them
- but when we thought Mom wasn't looking or around, we took a couple
- God is not limited like a mother; He is fully present
- **"Am I a God at hand, declares the Lord, and not a God far away?**
  Can a man hide himself in secret places
  so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord.
  Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 23:23-24 ESV)
- when we try to think we are unseen, we become a law unto ourselves
- that law then condemns us, convicts us in our sin
- so, recall God's omnipresence each day and fight against all sin in your life
- remember that every single sin you commit is against God
- **"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment." (Psalm 51:4 ESV)**

5. God's omnipresence should keep us confessing and repenting on a continual basis

- it isn't only actions or words that may be sinful
- God knows, because He is fully present everywhere, even in our thoughts, He knows
- He knows our motives, He knows our thoughts, He knows the intents of our heart always

- and yet, He also stands ready to forgive when we confess such matters to Him
- this should produce an overwhelming sense of gratitude to God

6. Assurance

- God sees; God is present; Nothing is hidden
- this brings a great sense of assurance to us as His redeemed ones
- there is blessed assurance that Jesus is ours
- it is why, when we do confess and repent of sins, we can now He has not withdrawn from us
- **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9 ESV)**
- give praise unto God that the "with me"s of Scripture do not depend upon our worthiness
- God wills that His children never be left alone
- **"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."" (Deuteronomy 31:8 ESV)**

Conclusion – We cannot be in more than one place at any one time

- we may try, in weaker moments, to reach for omnipresence, but we simply cannot be
- we'll end up fully present nowhere, spread thin, divided in attention
- how much better to trust our omnipresent God
- to be aware that He witnesses everything we do, say, and think helps us
- we live in light of this truth and pursue holiness
- wherever God is, which is everywhere, He sees His children through the eye of Grace
- so we confess rather than trying to hide sins in our heart
- we draw near to Him instead of running
- we abide in Him and savor how near He truly is to us
- it is a sweet, sweet thing to be free in His presence
- then we are free to be present wherever and whenever He has placed us