



Westminster
Presbyterian Church
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

When Is God at His Best?
Colossians 1:3-14

Our text for today is Colossians 1:3-14. Hear the word:

³In our prayers for you, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. ⁷This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, ⁸and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

It is amazing to me that of all people, the gospel of hope is bearing fruit in my life. I ask what I have done to deserve it. The answer is nothing. And not only

does the gospel bear fruit in my life and in yours, as Paul wrote his friends in Colossi, **“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his Son, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.”**

I am going to handle this text in an unusual way, by asking the question, “When was God at his best?” I have to admit up front that this idea came from a sermon preached by E.V. Hill many years ago.

“When were you at your best?” At what time in your life can you look back and say, “That was me when I was on top”? I hope that everyone here this morning can say, “At this very moment I am at my best.”

But I don’t know if at this very moment I am at my best. It could be that I was at my best 40 years ago when I was a student at SFA. I weighed 60 pounds less than I do now. I could run. I was the clean-up batter on my intramural softball team playing the championship game. Unfortunately, we lost that game 3 to 1, but I was three for four and scored our only run. Sorry, I had to do a little bragging, but it could be that I was at my best at that moment.

Maybe I was at my best when my children were born. Maybe I was at my best when I became the founding president of Mt. Pleasant Habitat for Humanity. It’s hard to believe that it has been almost 14 years since I served Christ in that community.

In some ways, though it may take some convincing, but just maybe I am at my best here in Nacogdoches where I have the amazing opportunity of serving this church that I have grown to love.

It could be that the best person to answer the question of when I was at my best is to ask my mom, or Sally, but don’t ask my children.

But as I mentioned before, the question I want to answer this morning is when God was at His best?

Maybe God was at his best in the very beginning when He created the heavens and the earth. Consider the vastness of the universe. I heard a story of the Soviet cosmonaut who after returning from space said, “There is no heaven. I’ve been in space and I did not see it.” Well maybe the reason he did not see it is because he was orbiting the earth, and he hardly got into the backyard! Actually, he did not leave the house for the universe is a big place.

We are awestruck at the wonder and beauty of creation. I will never forget the glorious feeling that overcame me when I climbed Copper Mountain in southern Colorado. There, on the top of the mountain, was nothing to obstruct my view in any direction, and in every direction there were mountain peaks to view. It was one of the most glorious sights I have ever witnessed. God created that by calling order out of chaos. God gave me that moment and that view of the world to see his majesty.

Remember the words of Isaiah (40:25-26): **“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. “Lift your eyes and look at the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name.”**

In the Orion constellation, which we are able to view on winter nights, there is a red super giant star called Betelgeuse. The diameter of the star is the size of Jupiter’s orbit around the sun. Make sure you heard that right. It is not the size of Jupiter, but the size of Jupiter’s orbit. The star is 527 light-years away. Now I understand that light travels at 186,000 miles per second, and if you calculate that out to figure how many miles Betelgeuse is from us, you get, well you get a bunch of miles.

Now our solar system, the Milky Way galaxy, is made up of a billion stars. I guess it is a little arrogant to call the Milky Way our galaxy. On that grand scheme we are as nothing. I understand that astronomers tell us that there are many galaxies around the universe, there are even clusters of galaxies and maybe clusters of clusters. And what does Isaiah say, “God calls each star by name”? Every star of the trillions upon trillions in all the galaxies God calls by name.

We cannot begin to comprehend the vastness of this universe, yet God by His word spoke it into being. Surely, one could argue that at creation God was at his best, but I don't think so. Creation was pretty good, but that in creation, God made humans in his image.

The poet James Weldon Johnson wrote, "God was lonely, and he sat down beside the riverbank and thought." Like most of us, Johnson described God using human attributes, and he wrote about God thinking long and hard before he got the idea to make humans. Now, I wonder where the thought to make humans came from, because whoever gave God a thought would have to be God.

Often we confuse human characteristics with the greatness of God. That is why we don't consider God to be all that majestic; we try to simply make God a little bigger than ourselves. We sit down and think about a project before we proceed. We may even think long and hard, or at least we should. But God does not have to think long and hard; he already is perfect and does that which is perfect as part of his nature. And so without having to think, God made human beings.

Mull over for a moment what he made. Humans can put a baboon's heart into another human. We can build airplanes and spaceships. People invent medicines that will ignore all other parts of the body and specifically work on the part for which it was intended. I can take a medicine that will work on my eye and leave my thumbs alone.

God gave us many different abilities. Someone can play the organ and piano with skill. Another can sing to the glory of God. There are even some who can understand subjects like Calculus, Organic Chemistry, and Physics. All this understanding is because God made humans.

Yes, God did make a vast universe, but in that universe God gave life to humans, people created in God's own image, male and female. So let's conclude that when God created human beings, God was at his best. But no, I don't think that was God at his best.

Maybe God is at his best when he acted against the laws of physics and by his power work miracles. Look at the slaves coming out of Egypt with everything

they would need after Pharaoh had denied them for so long. Remember the miracles that happened when Aaron and Moses confronted Pharaoh. That must have been God at his best. E. V. Hill says, “It was the days when Pharaoh went to his refrigerator and frogs jumped out. He went to bed at night and was covered with gnats. He wanted a drink of water, but it had all turned to blood.” Then in the end, Pharaoh had a change of heart and pursued the slaves, but God parted the waters of the Red Sea, and you know what happened. Was this when God was at his best? No, no I don’t think so.

Maybe the place to see God at his best is to check God’s reaction to what has happened to his human creation. God made humans, and humans failed. Everything about our race has failed. We have all experienced fallenness. That’s one reason you can’t remember your own phone number. You have been through the fall, and no one is perfect.

God looks at our fallen condition, a condition that in the face of the bounty of what the earth supplies, people remain hungry, people have inadequate medical attention, wars abound, all caused by pride, greed and other national sins, as Isaiah said, “**no one is righteous, no not one,**” and God said they should all perish and with that they will only get what they deserve. But it was then that God, who is perfect in justice, showed another side of his character and acted toward us in kindness. He harmonized his perfect justice with his perfect love through the sacrifice of his Son for our sin.

As you know I am the proud father of three children, and it boggles my mind that the oldest will be 38 this year. I love them, and it does not matter what they do, what they say, or how they act, I love them, and I am proud of them. Now as I consider God’s great gift in giving his son for our sin, I want to be frank with you. You see, if I were God, and had to give even one of my kids to get you into heaven, you just might not get there. I’m sorry but that is true. If I had to sacrifice one of my kids for you to enter into the pearly gates, you would never see them. But God, who has a love I cannot comprehend, who has a mercy I cannot touch, whose grace is amazing, gave his only son that who so ever believes in him should not perish but shall have everlasting life.

Of course, using language that separates the nature of God is not the best theology, but I hope you get the point.

But God, coming in Christ to die on the cross to show the depths of his love, to die for our sin had to be God at his best. Where can you find a better definition of love than at the cross? But no, I am not convinced even this is God at his best.

But I have not given up, so I looked at another place. How about in the garden of the resurrection? There the power of God overcame death. Of course, a power we will never comprehend was in place when God created the earth and the heavens. And God did a great thing when he interacted in a miraculous way in human history and preformed the miracle of parting the Red Sea. And such love has never been seen before in all human history, when Jesus gave his life on the cross. But Jesus' body was sealed in a tomb. He was dead for three days. That body was stiff, and a group of women were bringing some spices to anoint this dead body to keep it from smelling so horribly.

But when they got to the tomb, the stone was rolled away, and angels were there proclaiming the resurrection. "He is not here, for he has risen, so go and tell his disciples." Jesus has risen, that is our hope, not only in redemption, but our hope that we too will be given resurrected bodies. Certainly God was at his best in the resurrection garden where all history was redeemed, and Jesus was shown to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Son of God. Well, no, I still think we have to dig a little deeper to find God at his best.

Maybe if we look at what followed the resurrection we might find God at his best. You see there in the Resurrection garden, Jesus says something that must have made the women worry. He said, "Tell my followers and Peter." Why was Peter singled out? What was going to happen to Peter when Jesus confronted this backsliding, cowardly disciple who denied him in his greatest moment of need? Was Jesus going to find Peter and put him in his place? Condemn him? For Jesus did say, **"If you deny me before men, I will deny you before my father in heaven."**

But rather than condemn Peter, as deserving as he was of condemnation, Jesus was anxious to find Peter and to restore him by assuring him of God's love and forgiveness.

Listen to what Jesus said to Peter in John 21:15-17, **“Do you love me?”** And Peter answered three times just like he denied him three times, **“Yes, I love you, Lord!”**

The same is true for each one of us. And as good as you look this morning, I am convinced there are sinners here in this room. We have all denied Jesus at one time or another. We have all turned to our own way. We all at times have paid lip service to God in worship, then as soon as we leave the sanctuary lived like the devil – scheming, planning ways to get richer at the expense of someone else. And it really does not matter how we hurt another person, for after all, business is business. And still God wants to talk to us. His desire is to have a private conversation with his children. He wants to talk about the love he has for each one of us. He longs to tell us of the possibility of forgiveness that we do not deserve nor can we earn. And no matter what our background may be, he invites us into his church.

Is this not God at his best? Creation was an unfathomable thing. Parting the Red Sea is beyond reason. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have to be high on the list. All this points to the fact that God calls us sinful people and enters into a relationship with us. This has to be God at his best. But no, at least in my personal opinion, this is not God at his best.

Would you like for me to tell you when God was at his best or at least in my opinion? It's an event that is not recorded in the Bible. God was at his best 45 years ago when a young man was searching for meaning in his life. He was tired of following the crowd. He was troubled with the inconsistency in his life. At home he was one person, but at school he was another. At home he did what he could to please his parents, and at school he did what was necessary to be accepted even if it meant speaking and acting in ways that, to say the least, did not honor God. But God came to the young man. God was looking for him to have a conversation with him, just like Jesus sought out Peter.

There sitting by the fireside at a Bible study where I was invited to by some friends, God spoke to me through the voice of a man named Ken Green. In that conversation, God told me that he knew all about me. He knew of my double lifestyle. He knew there were things I had said and done that I would not want my parents to know. He assured me that I was right up there with the great sinners of the past, but he also told me of his love. God spoke to me of forgiveness and starting all over again. He spoke to me of how his Son Jesus died for my sin. Yes, I was preacher's kid and I knew all the stories of Jesus, but when God sought me out that night, the story of the cross and resurrection became more than intellectual knowledge. It became an inward life saving thing.

And still today, believe it or not, your preacher sins. But God still calls to me. God, even today, tells me of his love, his forgiveness, and his plan for my life. It's a good plan that I still mess up, but God comes again and again and again wooing me in his direction. It is no wonder that the two most precious words in my vocabulary are love and grace.

I've had some fun this morning talking about when God was at His best. But actually, we know God is always at his best. At this moment, Almighty God who calls the billions upon billions of stars by name is calling your name. Do you hear him? He may be calling from deep inside your soul, but he is calling your name. If you trust Jesus Christ, God's provision for our sin, you are forgiven; you can start each day new in his grace. He is also graciously calling you into his service. Do you hear? Do you hear him? He is calling and offering us his best, so we can be our best.

What did Paul write to the Colossians? **“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his Son, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.”** Now go be your best. Amen.