

## The Fear Of God (Part One)

Faith, Hope, Love and Fear

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Given 05-Oct-98; Sermon #FT98-01-PM

Today, we will begin by reading very familiar scriptures. Hardly a Feast goes by that we do not read these:

**Deuteronomy 14:22-23** You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.

My emphasis in this sermon is on the word *learn*—learn to fear God. This is actually the first sermon of four parts. My next three sermons after this will be touching on this same subject, but this one will lay the foundation for the other three, and in this one we are going to see—at the very beginning anyway—we have to *learn* to fear God. It is not something that is born into us; it is not something that is instinctive. As a matter of fact, when one understands it rightly, it does not even *begin* until God calls us into a relationship with Him, and that relationship begins. This is because a degree of knowing Him is required to rightly fear Him.

In Psalm 34, David wrote in verse 11:

**Psalm 34:11** Come you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

David reinforces this fact that we have to be taught to fear God.

Christianity has a number of elements in its foundation that must be in place and operating if the principles to operate effectively in a person's life are going to be in place. One of these is the fear of the Lord. So also are faith, hope, and love.

These four—faith, hope, love, and the fear of the Lord—are like cornerstones that bind the entire foundation upon which the whole superstructure of Christianity rests. In fact, I think it can be said that they *are* the foundation—faith, hope, love, and the fear of the Lord. These are also the four main motivators that provide the impetus toward growth and a true witness for God.

Another familiar scripture along this line appears in Proverbs 1.

**Proverbs 1:5** A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.

**Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge .  
..

It is interesting that it should be stated that way. Not faith, not love, not hope, but . . .

**Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, that is, knowledge that has to do with God's purpose and will. We do not have it by nature, but it is the foundation to growth in God's way.

His Feasts are for the purpose of instruction—in trust, which is faith, in vision, which is hope, in affection and submission, which is love, and a deep, abiding respect, which is the fear of the Lord—all focused on enhancing our relationship with Him and fulfilling His will.

Now, how important is this fear of the Lord?

Isaiah 33 says something very interesting regarding the fear of the Lord.

**Isaiah 33:5-6** The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and strength of [your] salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure.

Another very interesting statement there. The NIV alters that reading just a bit, and I think it is very interesting.

**Isaiah 33:5-6** (NIV) The Lord is exalted for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.

A holy fear of the Lord is the key to unlocking the treasuries of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge.

When you look at this, meditate on it for a little while. I think that you will come to the conclusion that the way that this is stated is just an expanded parallel of what Solomon said back there in Proverbs 1:7 a couple of hundred years before Isaiah. The fear of the Lord is the key that unlocks the knowledge of God.

Now, it is just as true today, perhaps never more needed than in this day of information overload. But I feel that the fear of the Lord is not rightly understood today. Many feel that it is negative, and that it is something that must be replaced by love! Do you really want to throw away the key to the treasuries of God? I do not think so!

I feel that as we grow, the intensity of the fear of God should grow. It will increase far more than what we had at the beginning of our conversion. Just like faith, and love, and hope, it is going to increase as we go along.

It is interesting that in Hosea 4:6, Hosea wrote that God's people were destroyed for a *lack* of knowledge. Is that not a pretty good indication that they did not fear God, since that fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge?

Now lets look at a verse in Hosea 3.

**Hosea 3:5** Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God . . .

You can see that this is something that is yet future. It has to do with the regathering of the children of Israel into a nation.

**Hosea 3:5** . . . and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.

It seems to me that there is something missing in Israel's relationship with God that is important to God; important to them unlocking the treasures of God's salvation.

Is seeking God good? Certainly it is! Is God's goodness good? Absolutely! If this is so, then, so is the fear of the Lord good, because here it is equated with those two as something that Israel will do when they become converted after Christ's return.

Now we usually think of ourselves as running from our fears. But, think about the implications in those verses that we just read. The fear of the Lord is something that *draws* us to God. If it is the beginning of knowledge then there must be more knowledge after we begin to understand about the knowledge of God that leads us on into even more.

There is an interesting statement here in Hebrews 11 in regard to Noah.

**Hebrews 11:7** By faith, Noah, being divinely warned of things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household.

This can give one the impression that faith, of and by itself, was not enough. But he certainly had the belief, and certainly moved with fear. It is a motivator, and very important to a Christian's life. So the fear of God moved him to obey God's commands.

Part of our problem with this doctrine is contained in the word "fear" itself. It has many shades of differences, and a wide range of meaning. There is a kind of fear that should be shunned and avoided. This is the kind that the apostle Paul said has torment, and that perfect love casts out.

But the fear of the Lord inclines us *toward* God. It inclines us toward fellowship with Him, and has a number of nuances to it. There is a sense of awe at His greatness. There is a sense of respect for His Fatherhood. Another form is our fear of His sovereignty, which leads to obedience. But, overall, I want to impress this on our minds: The fear of the Lord is in no way negative! Everything about it is good, because it unlocks the treasures of God.

**Isaiah 60:5** Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart . . .

This is again, talking about the future when Israel is regathered.

**Isaiah 60:5** . . . shall swell with joy; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, and the wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.

This is a very valuable quality for us to have. We do not want to neglect the facilitation of the growth of it!

Let us go back to Leviticus 10, and beginning in verse 1:

**Leviticus 10:1-3** Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had commanded not them [to do]. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke [Notice this!], saying, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people, I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace."

This was a very shocking thing! Aaron had to watch, apparently, his two older sons killed instantaneously, probably by two bolts of lightning! It came flaring out of nowhere and struck them down and maybe turned them into cinders. I do not know.

But this happened because they disrespected God. They profaned His holy name by failing to carry out their responsibilities in the attitude and the manner He had prescribed. And I want to point out, that it did not matter that they were Aaron's sons, or Moses' nephews. There is no respect of persons with God. There is no partiality in His judgment. That quick, they lost their lives. What mattered was that they did not fear God enough to give Him the honor that He deserves. God's justice thundered out to leave a witness for all time.

Now, have we come near God, and are we giving Him—the Creator, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Savior—the honor that He deserves?

Those who come near to God must know that God is separate from everyone else, and that we are to come before Him on His terms. There are no ifs, ands, or buts. God is very patient, but things have to be done on *His* terms. The reason is because for Him to allow things to be done on our terms will not fulfill His purpose for us! He is the Creator. We are the created. We are *being* created.

Let me ask you what may seem like a strange question. Where is your mind right now? Now remember that you are before God. Where is your mind?

How would you like it if when you spoke to someone and they ignored you the entire time that you were talking with them, their eyes roamed all over with disinterest? Has that ever aggravated you? When you are talking to somebody, and it is apparent that their mind is somewhere else, and they are looking at everything but you, making no eye contact, is that not aggravating?

God wants our mind while we are here; He wants it concentrated on His Word.

I look out here and I see all of us, or most of us, I guess, in very nice clothing, and that is good. But how do you think that God would react if we appeared here before Him, in this setting, in informal clothing, even though we had more formal clothes, or came in clothing that is disrespectful of His office—really short skirts, or blue jeans?

I think we all understand that God booted out the man who showed up at the wedding feast because he was not dressed properly. Now we understand that dress has to do with the clothing of righteousness. But the matter of the fact is that dress was the illustration, and dress is important to God.

This principle washes over into other areas. How do we treat other people—especially God's people? Are we respectful of them? Are we considerate of them?

I have used a term here in a couple of sermons recently: Reciprocity, which means "a back and forth," and "an exchange."

This scripture involves a king.

**II Chronicles 15:1** Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin."

At this time, Asa was a pretty good king. Look at the way this was stated:

**II Chronicles 15:2** "The Lord is with you while are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."

I brought up this word *reciprocity* because it is a very active principle in our relationship with God. In terms of giving Him respect, if we do not respect Him, He will not respect us. Will God draw near to those who show Him little or no respect? The answer is obvious: No, He will not! There are terms and conditions to our relationship with Him!

Back in Luke 6, there is something that touches on this. I want to show you that this carries over into the New Testament situations also:

**Luke 6:37-38** "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, will it be measured back to you."

Let us make this very plain: Respecting God—fearing Him—is the very doorway to all the "goodies" that God has in His treasure. Without the respect, we will not even get close to the door, let alone the "goodies." God does not come where He is not revered! This is reciprocity.

Things have to be done on *His terms*, because He knows the right way to do everything. We do not.

If He were to permit us to do things on our own that would not be good for us. This is a very important principle—maybe plainly put—but again, you know what He did to the person who showed up at the wedding supper inappropriately dressed. There was no respect for His will, and so that person was ushered right out.

Why do we have difficulty fearing God? Probably, if we could see Him, there would be no difficulty. But, we cannot see Him. That is something that has been denied us, and it is something that we have to deal with.

**Psalms 89:6-7** For who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him.

Respect, honor, dignity, and formality are areas of life that are being given short shrift these days. One of the reasons is because the churches have lost their power. Another is because of the example of many that are notorious in politics, in business, and in entertainment. Their example, their leadership



tends to produce a cynical disrespect in those of us who are watching. It motivates us to emulate—to be like them in their casualness. It is sort of an "I'm as good as you" approach that subtly creeps into every facet of life including our approach to God.

Human nature always tends to seek the lowest common denominator; to do or give as little as necessary, but that is not acceptable with God. He even requires a deep respect for the offices held by scoundrels! Do you know why? Because to respect that office is to respect the God who put them in or allows them in that office—God rules and His decisions are to be honored.

Now those scoundrels, if *they* are to be respected, should not God Himself? Who can compare to Him? Nobody! That is what this verse says. "Who, even in heaven, can be compared to the Lord?"

Consider this: Imagine one who is famous in the most powerful of nations. He is gifted and knowledgeable. Everybody in his nation knows of his greatness. He is an inventor who has made many scientific contributions. In addition to that, he is his nation's outstanding athlete. And over and above this, he is his nation's king, and wise ruler. He is given great honor. Parades are held for him. Glorious receptions are held for him. Songs are written about him.

But what if that king traveled to a different country where his position and all of his accomplishments, and his greatness, were unknown? What kind of a reception would he receive where even their greatest men were far below his caliber? What if he were to visit them without his royal robes, or any of the entourage of nobility—security forces, counselors, servants—but rather, he would go alone? How would he be treated? Would he be treated as any other man, or any other foreigner?

It is very likely, brethren, that he would be given little or no respect. He might even be treated with contempt, simply because he is a foreigner. And even though his inventions have greatly benefited the nation that he is visiting, he would not be accorded the honor that was due him. Do you know why? Because they do not know who he is!

Now if you are thinking, you will find that what I have just described fits Jesus Christ.

**John 1:10-11** He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

They did not know Him. In order for there to be fear for somebody—respect for them—or in the case of God, reverence for Him, you have to know Him. Just knowing *about* Him is not enough! We have to know *Him*—as our Father, as Sovereign Ruler, as Healer, as Forgiver, as the Provider. We have to know Him in every facet of life in order to come to the proper respect. And to give Him the honor, and the glory, and the dignity of who He is, what He is, what He does, and where He is headed with what He is doing.

As long as we do not know Him, we will not give Him the respect that is due to Him. He will always seem to us to be insignificant, because our focus will always be on ourselves and our own needs, and we will not be thinking, meditating, about Him and what He is. *The fear of the Lord is directly tied to knowing God.* We do not know Him before He initiates the relationship. That is why we must *learn* the fear of the Lord.

When He came as a man to the people whose nation He delivered time and time again, those who regularly attended the Sabbath services in the Temple—praying for the benefits that would accompany His rule—did not recognize Him because they did not *know* Him. So, they rejected Him, and killed Him.

Even though He was their Creator, even though He was their Savior, they had no fear of Him. This is a very obvious example. But, it is from an obvious example like this that we can begin to learn why God says that the fear of Him has to be learned. Christianity is experiential. It requires living it to know it and understand it. It is not something that can be learned from a book. God has to be sought out, and lived with as a part of our lives for us to know Him as well.

So, it is no wonder that they gave Him no honor. Instead, they treated Him as a common criminal, and they killed Him as a threat!

There is a very good reason why. Isaiah put his finger on it:

**Isaiah 29:13** Therefore the Lord said [now listen to this]:  
"Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men."

In other words, their concepts of God did not come from the Bible. It did not come from their experience with Him on a one-on-one basis. It came from other men's concepts of God.

"Their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." That is why He was not recognized. Jesus quoted this in the New Testament as to why they did not recognize Him. That is why He was so disrespected. Why they gave Him no honor. And why He was rejected and killed.

And, were we there, we would have done the same! They had reduced the glory of the Lord to the glory of a corruptible man, and they served God in the image that they had created, and not His true image!

It was idolatry. Their concept of God was an idol.

Now all of us are guilty of this, because none of us has really known God! Thus, we must come to fear Him, and we will come to fear Him as we come to know Him.

If you will recall the morning sermon on the Day of Trumpets, where it was asked, "Do we recognize the Christ pictured in the Day of Trumpets?" He is the Warrior King who is going to make a bloody mess out of things before He straightens things up. He deals with men in a hard and stern way.

There are some verses in Psalm 71 that touches on this.

**Psalm 71:17-19** O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come. Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things: O God, who is like You?

The answer to that is *nobody*! This is why any conception of God that is not drawn from actual contact with Him is going to be an idol.

You know, Adam and Eve, right from the beginning, disrespected God. They even saw God with their own eyes! But, where was His honor when His counsel was rejected in the acceptance of the serpent's advice?

It was futile, sheer intellectual vanity for Adam and Eve to think that they could be like God. This is what the serpent sold them on—that they could be like God apart from God! Adam reduced God down to the level of a mere man whose counsel was no better than anybody else's. Where was the fear? Where was the honoring shown by obedience?

Here is another example: How about Israel coming out of Egypt? They knew that the God of Moses was the God who released them from their bondage.

In the Song of Moses, it says,

**Exodus 15:1-2** Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord and spoke saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him."

**Exodus 15:10** "You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters."

**Exodus 15:14-17** "The people will hear and be afraid; sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; and the mighty men of Moab, trembling will take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them; by the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over. O Lord, 'till the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established."

God released them from bondage and they all knew that song, as the words clearly show. And then they heard the voice of God from the mountain, announce His Ten Commandments, and they entered into a covenant with that God vowing, "All that You have said, we will do!"

Now, turn to Exodus 32.

**Exodus 32:4** And he [Aaron] received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!"

Moses went up into the mount, and while he was gone, they impatiently made a golden calf. Did it ever dawn on them all the while they were slaves in Egypt that the golden calf that they worshipped there had not released them from any of their oppression, let alone their slavery?

Do you see? I am pointing this out because I want us to see how easy it is to disrespect God? We do not intend—we do not plan—to do this.

**Exodus 32:5** So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow is a feast to Yahweh [to the Lord]."

Do you know why they made the golden calf? Because that was what they were familiar with in their worship! They were going to worship Yahweh

according to the precepts of men! And that quickly, they flipped back to their former life even though they knew that it was the God of Moses who had released them! It was not until Moses was sent, revealing the Eternal God, that liberty came, but here they are now, proclaiming a feast, not to Baal, but to Yahweh the Eternal. And the golden calf represented Him. The calf was their conception of Yahweh.

This is a very familiar occurrence in life, and it accounts for why we have trouble fearing God.

**Romans 1:20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

That is pretty condemnative, that we should know from the creation a great deal about this God. But the precepts of men keep interfering:

**Romans 1:21-23** Because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful, but became futile in their thoughts [the precepts of men], and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

God becomes reduced to a concept of animals, or other men, and they gave the honor to that.

Today we live a culture that glorifies man and all of his wonderful accomplishments. We now believe that we are getting better and better. Without stopping to think about this seriously, we glory in man's technological accomplishments, like cars, computers, television, space research, and a whole host of what we consider to be labor saving devices.

I do not mean to degrade these things, but only to point out that this is not what life is about. I believe that during the Millennium, mankind will be forced back into a farm-based economy and life because it tends to help us to understand God better.

Meanwhile, in the United States there is a lot of talk about God while we fall apart. How many times has our President, recently, as well as his supporters, invoked the name of God, usually in regard to tolerance and forgiveness while trying to convince us that sin is just a private affair.

Now, they are doing this, brethren, because they do not fear God. They do not know Him. It is nothing more than a bald-faced dodge that many seem to be accepting. These people do not fear God, and as a result, their conduct is frequently reprehensible.

Since we have come out of this culture, is it possible we think of fearing God as they do?

I think that there is an awful lot of that hanging onto us. You cannot go anywhere without seeing pictures of the long-haired Jesus—all different kinds of misconceptions of Him.

Almost all of us have a measure of the right kind of respect that I am speaking of—the kind of fear that almost always determines behavior.

If you are sailing along at 65 or 70 mph in a 55 mile an hour zone, and you spot a policeman, what happens? There is an almost involuntary reaction. We slow down just like everybody else is doing in order to avoid getting a ticket.

Now there is in this a measure of the right kind of fear. It is not terror. But, neither is it approving, caring, loving, or admiring respect either. The true fear of God encompasses all these and goes far beyond. There has to be a starting place, and our calling is that starting place.

**Romans 1:18-20** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress

the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them [or to them], for God has shown it to them. For the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Do you fear power? Yes, you do! That is why we react the way we do when we see the policeman and we are breaking the law.

Do you fear power? Do you respect it enough to submit to it, especially when that power demonstrates its benign purity and goodness?

Now a policeman may not represent those things, but God does.

Isaiah had a confrontation with power:

**Isaiah 6:3-4** And one cried to another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken at the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

The whole earth is filled with His glory. Now, what is His glory in this situation? It is what He has made that speaks huge volumes about Him. Everything from the tiniest of insects to elephants, whales, and His crowning physical achievement: Man. We are fearfully and wonderfully made! But, everything that we look to was made by God, or from the raw materials that He originally made: water, air, sunshine, mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans, lakes, rain, soil—we could go on and on about the things that God has provided for us.

There is a reason why we have to begin in a place like this. It is because we respect power.

**Psalms 145:9-11** The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all of His works. All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of



Your kingdom, and talk of Your power [Do we?], to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

We are getting into some serious stuff here regarding the fear of the Lord. How often do you talk about the things that God has made? Why is it needful that we do these things? Because, it builds within us the fear of the Lord, that is why! It builds within us a respect of what He is, of what He has done, of what He is doing, and of what He is going to do. Those things are made by Him to demonstrate to you and me the capacity—or some of the capacity—of His mind, of His brilliance, of His intelligence, and we could go on to His love, and so forth. How often do you speak to each other of the wonderful works of God as compared to your problems in this world?

If you are anything at all like me, you probably hardly ever talk about God's wonderful works. Do we ever look into the things He has made for the express purpose of coming to know His awesome mind better? So that we can exalt in the fact that this is our Father, and be humbled by the privilege to be able to come into His presence, praying, praising, and giving thanks? I do not think so. Yet, this is the foundation of fear of God! It is the very thing that He points to Himself that will begin to build in us a respect for what He is.

We rejoice in the clever things that men are able to do with their inventions.

**Psalms 19:1-4** (NIV) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words into the ends of the world.

And this is why God says that mankind is without excuse for knowing a great deal about Him, and standing in fear of Him. Because, what He has made is so obvious, and so awesome, that we cannot avoid it! But, we do! And we miss out on the proper concept of God.

Now I know you have heard things like this before, but I want to remind you.

The universe that God has created is so immense, but it is that very immensity that is intended by Him to help us to understand how *big* He thinks! How far in the future He is thinking, how powerful this One, who has made all these things, placed these things in the heavens where they are, and knows the name of every single one of them! I forget my *kid's* names!

The sun is the nearest star. The next one is 4.3 light-years away. Light travels at 186,282 miles per second. That is 670 million miles an hour. Jetliners travel at about 500 miles per hour. If you went to the moon by jetliner, it would take you 19 days with no stops. Light gets there in 1.3 seconds!

A jetliner to the sun would take you 21 years. Where were you 21 years ago? You know, that is almost 1/3 of a lifetime. Light travels that distance in 8 minutes, 20 seconds. Do you want to go there by automobile? Forget it—200 years just to go to the sun!

The nearest star: 4.3 light-years away. If we reduced the earth to 1/8 inch in diameter—that is about the size of a peppercorn—and reduced the sun and its distance from the earth to the same scale, it would be 8 inches in diameter, and 26 yards from the peppercorn. That is just a little over 1/4 of a football field's length away. At this scale, where is the nearest star? One hundred yards? Maybe a mile? Not even close! If that peppercorn were in San Diego, the nearest star would be about 1000 miles past New York City out in the Atlantic Ocean! It would take you 51 billion years to get there by jetliner at 500 miles an hour! And we are still yet in our own Milky Way Galaxy!

The next closest galaxy is the Andromeda. It is 2.3 million light-years from the Milky Way Galaxy.

The most distant object anybody has seen on any telescope is 13.2 billion light-years away!

This is the God we get down on our knees to pray to. He intends that we appreciate the kind of mind that He has, and the fact that the focus of His attention is not on the far reaches of the galaxy, but is on you and me! What

He wants from us is respect. He does not make mistakes. He is aware of everything that is going on. And He loves us with a love that we cannot even begin to understand. So much so, that He was willing to separate Himself from the only other Being He could communicate with on the same level. This is our inheritance.

We think we know so much. We think we have power. We think that we are so handsome. We are so beautiful. We think that we can do so many wonderful things. We have not even begun to crawl out of the ditch, compared to God!

**Psalms 147:4-5** He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.

There is nothing that He does not know. There is nothing that He is not aware of that is going on in His creation.

**Jeremiah 10:11-16** Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens." He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and He has stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens: "and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth, He makes lightning for the rain, and brings the wind out of His treasures." Everyone is dull-hearted without knowledge; every metalsmith is put to shame by an image; for his molded image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are futile, a work of errors; in the time of their punishment they shall perish. The Portion of Jacob is not like them . . .

We need to get that burned into our minds. *There is nobody like God.* He is separate. He is apart. He is different. There is no conception of Him that we can come up with that could come close to what He really is! And, it takes a lifetime for us to just barely scratch the surface.

How do you deal with somebody who can create a heaven like that? With respect!

We give honor to a guy who can hit a little white ball 350 feet out of a baseball park. We give honor to people who can do some acting. We give honor to people who can rule over something. But the honor and respect that should go to God is something that we do not spend enough time thinking about. It needs to be meditated upon in order for us to come to respect Him. If we do not think about Him as a person—as a personality—we lose a great deal.

In I Kings 8 (part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple):

**I Kings 8:27-30** "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O Lord my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today; that your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place."

How *great* is this God we serve, who is our Father! This is just a tiny, tiny piece of the mind of God that we come before in prayer, or at services, or in our marriage, or on the job, or when we shop, when we talk, when we study. Do we truly respect the presence of this One whose name, as children, we bear? He dwells in you.

Will God dwell in this house?

This is awesome!

When we were baptized, we were immersed into the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit and we became Family members. Do we so respect that name, that we fear to bring any—even the tiniest bit of—shame upon it?

Now, let us get a little bit more on this God:

**Isaiah 40:9-11** O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get you into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold, your God!' Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

This is just another side of Him. There is not only power here, but there is infinite tenderness as well.

**Isaiah 40:12** Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

Sure, this is hyperbole, but it is given so we will understand the greatness of the mind of this God that He is able to think in these kind of terms.

**Isaiah 40:13** Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him?

There is no man smart enough to do that.

**Isaiah 40:14-18** With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless. To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him?

Is it beginning to come clear why Jesus said they teach using the precepts of men? And why He was so affronted and offended by that?

And then, He goes on into describing an idol:

**Isaiah 40:21-23** Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants thereof are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; and makes the judges of the earth useless.

**Isaiah 40:25-26** "To whom do you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, and brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and strong power, not one is missing.

There is so much in this area for us to think about. My purpose in this first sermon is only to lay a foundation, and at the same time, perhaps, motivate a bit of study of, meditation on, and talking about the very things that God points out in His Word. He intends to produce respect for what He truly is in us.

We appreciate the brilliance of other people, and the power that other people have. Why can we not appreciate the greatest Power, and greatest Brilliance that there is anywhere in the universe, and study into the things that He has made, and allow that to begin to cogitate around in there, and begin to build a bit of respect in us for Him? There is no reason why we cannot. But, we have got to make the effort to do that. It will not just happen.

I fear that we are neglecting one of the major foundations of all Christianity, and that is the respect for the power of the mind of our Father.