

The Ultimate Unveiling of God's Character

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What a blessing. I was thinking about as they were singing that last number and both of the songs have been such blessings today, but how amazing and beautiful the human voice is, how God has made us to be able to sing his praises and there is something of the crowning of his creation in man. We see that with the power and the beauty of the human voice and we see the glory of the Savior who made us, most of all.

This morning, we want to continue looking at the resurrection we've been talking about, but also the cross, but I want to gather our thoughts moving in that direction toward the cross and the empty tomb around a question. So we could title this God's final answer to the ultimate question and the ultimate question, there are a number of questions that are ultimate but I think this one, you could argue this is the ultimate question and that is: what is God like?

I have a friend, we were at a pastors' fellowship this past week with brothers in the greater Atlanta Baptist network and we were having our time of discussion and prayer together and Jim was sharing about a ministry that his church does where they do witnessing and they would do a particular training and they'd always start with the question, "Do you believe in God?" And the second question is if they say yes, "What do you think God is like?" Then the third question is, "Why do you think he's like that? How did you come to that opinion?" And that allows for an opportunity to begin to talk about how we really know what God is like. But isn't that one of the most important questions, "What do you think God is like? What is God like?" is the most important question but our thinking being right about it is the greatest importance for our eternal destiny.

What do you think God is like? Christopher Hitchens, a noted atheist, made this statement when he was asked about...he is one of the militant atheists, Christopher Hitchens was asked on the Hannity & Colmes show back in 2007 about his book. He wrote a book called "God is Not Great." He's an atheist and he was asked if there were a God, why are you so concerned that there not be a God? Why do you believe there isn't a God? He said this, "I think it would be rather awful if it was true. If there was a permanent, total, round-the-clock divine supervision and invigilation of everything you did, you would never have a waking or sleeping moment when you weren't being watched and controlled and supervised by some celestial entity from the moment of your conception to the moment of your death, it would be like living in North Korea."

Now, what is Hitchens' problem? His problem is he's believed the lie. He has believed the eternal lie that Satan began selling in the garden and that is that God is not good. And because he believes that God is not good, he is determined not to believe in God, though the Bible says the fool has said in his heart there is no God. He would rather be a fool than to believe in a God that he fashions in his own mind in accord with what Satan has said that God is not good. That's essentially what happened in the garden. When Satan said to Eve, "Has the Lord said that you shall not eat from any tree in the garden?" he's impugning his goodness right there. "Hasn't God put you in this garden with all these beautiful fruit trees and told you not to eat of a single one of them, right?" That was a lie. She corrects that, "No, there's only one tree we can't eat from because the day that we eat of it, we will die." He says, "You will surely not die." Satan goes on, "For God knows that in the day that you eat of it, you will become like God, knowing good and evil." So what he's essentially saying is, "God is holding out on you. He's lied to you to keep you from reaching all that you could be. You see, he's not good. He's not out for your well-being." That's the lie.

But the question is: how do we know what God is like? When you really talk to people and you think back on your own history, what did you used to believe about God. Many folks have many different opinions. As you survey people, you find that what John Calvin said is true, Calvin said that the human heart is an idol factory, that is we make God in our own image; we fashion gods according to our own desires. So you talk to people and they say, "My god would not do this. My god is like this."

Well, that's because your god is something you're fashioning in your own mind and heart and the question is: where do we find out what God is truly like? So I want to share with you the Christian viewpoint. First of all, that God is wonderfully good; that he is infinitely wonderful; that to know him is to experience the greatest joy, the greatest fulfillment. But where do we find out that he is good? John Piper wrote a book, "God is the Gospel." I love that title, God is the Gospel. The good news is God, the God of the Bible. He is good news.

Now, we say that, where do we really find that? What do we base that on? I want to share with you five points this morning and before we jump into that, I want you to turn to Psalm 19. What we're going to see is that God reveals himself in a number of different ways culminating in the cross and the resurrection. He unveils his essential character, his heart, who he truly is in a number of ways. We're going to look at those but we're going to find our fullest description and unveiling of who God is, the ultimate answer to that ultimate question in the cross.

Let's read verses 1 to 10 of Psalm 19.

1 The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. 2 Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. 3 There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. 4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed

a tent for the sun, 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. 6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat. 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask now that you might speak to our hearts by your Spirit through your word that you might encourage each one of us to see your essential beauty, your wondrous goodness in the various ways that you have spoken to us and most completely in your Son and in his cross. We pray that he might be glorified. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, where do you go to find out what God is like? What is the Christian answer to that? There are five points this morning. You go five places that you go to find out what God is like. The first place we saw in the Psalm we just read and that is nature.

The first point, where do you go to find out what God is like? You go to nature, that is, because nature is God's creation. The Psalmist is basically telling us that though there are not words, there is not an audible sound going out yet day after day creation is pouring forth and declaring who God is. Romans 1 tells us that the invisible attributes of God are understood through what is made; that God has made it evident in his very creation who he is, his divine power and his majesty. So we see God in creation. We see him in the wonderful complexity of every created thing.

I saw a month or two ago the movie "Is Genesis History?" which is a very helpful movie, probably out on DVD now. It came around the theaters just a couple of different times. I mentioned it six or eight weeks ago. And in that, one of the scientists, it's basically a movie about Genesis, proving that Genesis is history from the various disciplines of science, and one of the scientists that they talked with was a geneticist and he was speaking about the genome project and the wonder of DNA, and as they understand, scientists understand more and more about DNA, the amazing complexity that is in every living thing boggles the mind. God has wired information into the smallest being, the smallest animal, insect, so that scientists marvel at it. The more they look at it, the more amazed they are. The complexity cries out for a Creator, not accidents of history.

So that's why the Bible says the fool has said in his heart there is no God. Everyone that is alive can see the handiwork of God in the verses that were read from Acts 17. God is making himself known throughout the world and so that people, there is enough knowledge out there that they might grope and find him for he is not far from any of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. So we can look to nature to see

something about God but nature is not enough to save us but it is enough to lead us to repent and to cry out to God for more revelation so that everyone who does not repent and believe and seek God is without excuse, according to Romans 1.

So we can look to nature. That's the first place we can go to find out truly what God is like. The second place is to the Bible. Psalm 19 is organized in just that way. The Psalmist is basically saying God has spoken in two books, the first book is the book of nature. The first six verses we read are speaking about how God is speaking through nature, he's speaking through his creation, but then in verse 7 he turns the corner to the second book, the more wonderful, the more clear book, the book of Scripture, the Bible. So the second place we go to find out what God is truly like is to the Bible. In the Bible, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." In the Bible we have God speaking to us perfectly in human language; that the God of glory who has made all that we see out of nothing has spoken to us and he's spoken to us with clarity so that he can reveal to us more of himself and what he's truly like.

The Old Testament, we find the fact that the Old Testament and the New Testament claim to be the word of God. There is no doubt about it, they claim to be giving God's unique word. This is the place to look if you want to know what God is like. Almost 4,000 times in the Old Testament, almost 4,000 times you find phrases like "thus says the Lord; God said; the Lord said; the word of the Lord came." The Old Testament claims to be the authentic word of the living God and the New Testament comes right alongside it and says, "Yes, this is the full revelation of the living God." The Bible stands above every other claim that speaks for God. Every other book that claims to speak for God falls down before the beauty of Scripture.

The uniqueness of the Bible. Amazing unity of the Bible. Written by 40 different authors. Think about that: 40 different authors over a period of 1,500 years. Imagine if you were writing a book, you were assigned to write a chapter in a book and the first chapter that you're writing in was written at 600 AD in some kind of form of English and you're finishing up a book that was written over that period of time. That's the length of time that the Bible was written 1400 BC to 90 AD, 1,500 years. It was then written by 40 authors, it was written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Written by people on three different continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. And yet there is one clear message that binds the whole Bible together because this is not just a human book, it is a fully human book but it is also a fully divine book. God has spoken.

So where do you learn what God is like? You go to Scripture. You find out what the true God is like by looking at his book. But thirdly, the third point this morning, how do you know what God is like? You can look in nature, you can look to the Bible, thirdly, you look to Jesus.

Turn with me to Hebrews 1:1-3. What is God like? How do we know? The author of Hebrews tells us, "1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He

appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." So the author of Hebrews says, "Listen, God spoke through all the prophets of the Old Testament. Yes, he did. He spoke in many and diverse ways through the prophets but in these last days, he's now spoken to us more fully in his Son."

And look what he says about his Son, verse 3, how his Son reveals what God is like, "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." To look at Jesus is to see the radiance of the Father's glory. To see Jesus is to see the exact representation of his nature. God has revealed himself fully and perfectly in his Son. That is the mission of the Son. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, have sent the Son to reveal fully the heart of Yahweh, the heart of the one true God. And Jesus has done it perfectly and brilliantly, the radiance of his glory, the exact representation of his nature. John 1:18, the Apostle John says that, "No man has seen God at any time; but the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." He has made him known.

So when you talk to someone and they have their own views about what God is like a good question might be, "Would you like to know with certainty what God is like? If you could know with certainty, would you want to know that?" Only a fool would say no to that, but there are lots of fools out there. But that question, "If you could know with certainty what God is like, would you like to?" Yes. "Then read the New Testament and see the glory of God in the face of Christ."

When you see Jesus, you see God. That's exactly what he said. Remember what he said to Thomas in John 14:9, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. For I and the Father are one," John 10:30. To see Jesus is to see God. John 1:18, "No man has seen God at any time; but the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The word for "declared" means literally "exegeted." He has let out the meaning out from the shadows into the open. This, the invisible God has become visible. This is the delight that thrills the hearts of the apostles. This is the good news. We know what God is like. This is the refrain throughout the New Testament. Hear Paul saying in Colossians 1:15 about Jesus, "He is the image of the invisible God." The invisible God has now made himself visible.

This is the message, the best news the world has ever seen. Jesus Christ has fully revealed to us what God is like so if you want to see what God is like, look at Jesus. Look at his humility and his lowly birth and wonder at a God who would come into time and space, into this sin-sick world, this world that's engaged in a rebellion against him, a cosmic rebellion, throwing off his reign. For the Bible says that all of us are haters of God; that no one seeks God, no, not one. Not the true God. Not the true and living God. We're all idolaters. We make up gods of our own desires.

The Lord comes into this world to reveal himself, his lowliness. You see his character; all the different attributes of God can be seen in Jesus. Every wondrous attribute of God. We see some that we might think at first are less pleasant like his wrath. We see the wrath of God in the ministry of Jesus. Sometimes people make the mistake to say, "I like the New

Testament God, not the Old Testament God." That's idolatry, isn't it? "I want God to be what I want him to be so I emphasize the New Testament over the Old Testament." Well, the problem is the New Testament God is exactly the same God as the Old Testament God. There is no difference, it's just a matter of perspective, kind of just wishful thinking. The New Testament God that is revealed in Christ is the same God as the Old Testament God and you see it in Jesus. Even as you see his love, you see his wrath. His ministry is punctuated at the beginning and at the end with him driving out the moneychangers in the temple.

I mean, think about that. If someone were to come in today to this building and make a whip. With this day of terrorism, this doesn't work as well because we think about terror and all that, but just work with me on that. If someone came in with a whip and started driving us out because we are not...we are up here talking about everything other than Christ and they came in and ran us out and said, "We've got to straighten this place up," ran me off the platform because I'm telling you, you know, just nifty things, tricks for successful living. That's essentially what Jesus did at the beginning of his ministry. He went into the temple and he drove out the moneychangers who had turned the holy place of God, a place of worship, into a den of robbers. They were taking advantage of the poor. Doing the exact opposite, they were putting up barriers to people worshiping and Jesus exercised expressing the wrath of God, drives them out. He does it again right before he's crucified at the end of his ministry. Listen to what he says to the Pharisees in Matthew 23 when he calls them white-washed sepulchres. You see the wrath of God in the person of Jesus and that's a good thing because wrath is a good thing.

I was reading an article by a Croatian theologian who made the point, he said, "I used to find the wrath of God something that was unattractive, it was something I would rather ignore and hide from, pretend isn't there, but then I saw what happened in my country," Croatia, part of the former Yugoslavia, all the ethnic violence, genocide. And when you see thousands murdered by evil people, you want someone to stop it and someone to make them pay and that's the wrath of God.

Our holy Savior hates sin. He is holy and righteous and he hates sin. At first glance, that is a problem for us because we are all sinners but that's not all that God is. The same God who shows wrath is also a God who shows compassion. Look at the compassion of Jesus. He was a friend of sinners. Those who knew they were sinful and needed a Savior, his heart was always welcoming. The humble didn't receive wrath. The humble received mercy and grace. He said, "Come to Me you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest for I am gentle and lowly of heart." What is God like? There is a gentleness and lowliness of heart about the eternal God. There is a willingness to draw near to us and to allow us to come to him.

That is good news and it's also good news that he punishes evil. What would the world be like if there were no police force? There was no justice system? God is good. We see his majesty in his meekness in his ministry. His majesty, his exaltedness, his authority. You watch Jesus as he walks through the pages of the New Testament, he binds evil, he has authority over evil spirits. On occasion, the evil spirits recognize him as he is just

walking close to them and cry out of the person they possess, begging for mercy. So great is the authority of the one who walks before them.

Those who heard him teach there in Matthew, the first great extended sermon of Jesus recorded, the Sermon on the Mount, when he finishes what do they say? "They marveled at this man for He spoke as one having authority." An authority they had never heard before. Incredible authority because the one who was walking the paths of Palestine was truly the living God, the King of kings and the Lord of lords and you could hear it in his voice.

He was majestic. The majesty of God, but also the meekness of God. This majestic God who is the King of kings and Lord of lords said this. People had all kinds of misconceptions. Hitchens thinks God is like the God of North Korea, like Big Brother, someone who wants to find out if you're having any fun and squash it. That's not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is not the God that people tend to think he is. In fact, it's interesting when you look back at history and the various gods that people have made, the Babylonian god or the gods of the Vikings, you know, these gods of power and lust and who want servants. Marduk basically in Babylonian theology, he ruled because he wanted slaves. He wants to rule over a kingdom of slaves that he oppresses and puts down, tramples upon.

Now, it is true if you come to Jesus Christ you have to be willing to become a slave but the one who asks you to take his yoke upon you and to serve like him, himself became a slave for us. He said, "I did not come to be served." This is what God is like, "I did not come to be served but to serve and to give My life a ransom for many." Behold, God the Son kneeling to wash his disciples' feet just hours before he's crucified, taking the lowliest, most abject form of service and saying this must happen for you to be saved. "I must go all the way down." We see that in his ministry. To see what God is like is to look at Jesus.

So we've said where do you find out what God is like? You find out what God is like in nature, in the Bible, you go to Jesus and you look at Jesus and, fourthly, you go to the cross. The cross of Jesus.

Turn with me to John 12:20. If Jesus has come to reveal God to us, which he has, he has come into the world to exegete the Godhead, to show us the Father, and his whole life is essentially that, we are seeing his glory throughout his life. John's Gospel in John 2:7 after he turns the water into wine says this, or maybe it's verse 11, "This is the first of his miracles which He did to show His glory." And in chapter 11, verse 4, he hears that Lazarus has died and he tells the disciples, "This has happened so that the glory of the Son might be made known." You see, his miracles made known his glory.

So Jesus' glory and the glory of the Father were being made known every moment of every day throughout his life, but listen to these words in John 12. We'll begin reading in verse 20, "Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast," this is right after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem within a week of the cross,

these Greeks, verse 21, "came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" Astonishing. What he's saying is the hour now has come finally for the Son of Man to be glorified. To be glorified means to have his essential being, his essential character made known. Glory, the idea biblically comes from the Old Testament word for "glory" which means "weight; heaviness; value." So to give a proper estimate of someone's value; to understand truly someone's character. So for him to say the Son of Man is about to be glorified, "I thought you had already been glorified?" Well, I have been. I've been being glorified all throughout my life but now is the hour in which I will truly be glorified.

It's interesting when you look at this as it unfolds in John's Gospel, it's "the hour has come." In John 2:4 when Mary comes to him at the wedding at Cana, I mentioned a moment ago it was the first miracle, he turned the water into wine. When she comes to him and says they have no wine, he says, "My hour has not yet come." Now as you go through the rest of the Gospel, in John 7 the opposition is growing. They want to kill him and we're told in John 7, I believe it's verse 30, they weren't able to lay hands on him for his hour had not yet come. Chapter 8, the same thing. They want to arrest him but they could not seize him for his hour had not yet come. The hour is coming and it's not yet.

When these Greeks come to Jesus, he says, "The hour has come." It's as if in the plan of God that the Father has communicated to the Son that the moment that the Greeks are seeking you, you will know the hour has come. Interesting that God did it that way. Something beautiful in that. It shows us that the God who is saving us through his Son, though he's worked through a one nation, the nation of Israel, has always intended to save all people. He's always intended to save people from all nations, more correctly. He saves all those who repent and believe in his Son from every tribe and kindred, and that's always been his plan from the beginning.

When he called Abraham, he said, "Go to the land that I will show you and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed, through your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed," in Genesis 22. The seed that is coming will bring blessing to all the families of the earth. Though God is working in Israel, throughout the Old Testament there are these anticipations that salvation is for all. All nations can come to the God of Israel.

When Jesus is born, who are those that first go to see him? The shepherds, but then after that, the wise men. The Gentiles come from the East because God is raising up his Savior and he will be a Savior for all people. So they come from the East, and here it seems as if at the end of his ministry when they come from the West, the Greeks.

Now it's the hour, but the hour has come. What is this hour? He tells us in verse 24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." He's saying that, "Though I have been revealing the Father and I could say to you last night, Philip, if you have seen me, you've seen the

Father." What he's saying now is as they approach the cross, "This is the moment when you will really see the glory of what the Father is like. You will see it more clearly than ever before."

In his book, "Delighting in the Trinity," Michael Reeves, speaking of this passage, says this, "Jesus is the glory of his Father shining out from the Father and perfectly enlightening us to see what the Father is really like, and now Jesus himself is to be glorified. That is, we are now going to see his innermost being and weight displayed. What does it look like? A seed dying to bear fruit, for he was speaking of his death. Astonishingly, the moment when Jesus finally reaches the deepest point of his humiliation, at the cross is the moment when he is glorified and most clearly seen for who he is. The moment of greatest humiliation is the moment of greatest exaltation of the glory of God." This is the wonder of it.

John Calvin said this, "In the cross of Christ as in a magnificent theater." He says, "In the cross of Christ as in a magnificent theater, the inestimable goodness of God is displayed before the whole world." The cross shows us the goodness of God, the unspeakable goodness of God. I said earlier that when you look at Jesus you see the attributes of God. It is true that in the cross you see the attributes of God on their fullest, most blazing and brilliant display ever.

We spoke earlier of his wrath. Think about this: the wrath of God seen in the cross. The wrath was seen throughout the Old Testament, the wrath was seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, but the wrath of God is seen most clearly in the cross. That is, wrath is God's determination to punish evil to put an end to sin. As we said, wrath is good and right. To oppose those who do evil, to stop that. Look how fiercely God opposes sin, how much he hates evil. Where do we see that more clearly than in the cross? For the suffering of Jesus paying for the punishment that sin deserves for everyone who would ever believe, look at how much he suffers and in that suffering, see God's wrath being poured out.

When Jesus was in the garden he said, "Father, let this cup pass from Me." He prayed that three times. "If it's possible, Father, all things are possible with You, let this cup pass from Me, but nevertheless not My will but Your will be done." What was the cup he was talking about? He was drawing on the imagery from the Old Testament that the cup is the cup of God's wrath. "Please don't make Me drink the cup of Your wrath, nevertheless not My will but Your will be done." The Son of God standing before and fully cognizant of what the wrath of God really being unleashed would be like, trembled before it. That's why he struggled in Gethsemane. It was the wrath of God that he trembled before.

Now we see it in his physical suffering too, the cross itself. The physical agony of the cross is indescribable, basically perfected by the Romans to maximize suffering and agony. So the physical suffering of Christ is an expression of God's hatred of sin. This is what my sin deserves.

The emotional suffering of Christ. I mean, think about how profound was his emotional suffering as he went to Calvary. The sense of profound aloneness. He was abandoned by

his disciples and he was denied by the one closest to him, Peter. In all of this, God is measuring out the cup of his wrath. These things weren't accidental. They were prescribed exactly the punishment that needed to be brought to the eternal Son of God to pay for our sins.

We looked at that on Wednesday night where Jesus is being tried before the religious leaders and Peter has come into the courtyard of the high priest and Peter three times denies Jesus, and the third time in the strongest terms, "I say I do not know the man!" Jesus, knowing that he's going to the cross, hears that denial and Luke tells us he looked at Peter, so across the way their eyes meet and the Son of God bearing the weight of the sins of the world, bears the rejection of his closest friend.

Beyond that, he would experience the indignity of being beaten by the religious leaders. I mean think about this, the men who were respected and revered by all of Israel, men of dignity, comportment, in their rage began striking Jesus and mocking him like schoolchildren. That's the wrath of God. God is unleashing the power of darkness in men's hearts and Satan himself is venting all of his hatred at the Son. God has pulled back his hand of protection. "This is your hour and the power of darkness," Jesus said when they arrested him.

He experiences the Roman soldiers mocking him in an extraordinary way. Something compelled them also. They recognized in this man something that they hated more than just a regular Jewish criminal and they mocked him, dressed him in a robe, put a crown of thorns on him and bowed down before him in mock worship. The crowds yelling, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The thieves on the cross, hurling insults at him. Here they are dying and they take time out of their agony to curse him.

What's happening? He who knew no sin has become sin and that's why Jesus cries out when the sky gets dark at 12 noon, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" That's the spiritual agony. Not just physical agony, not just emotional agony, but the spiritual agony. Somehow the Father's love and affection, Jesus is separated from it. He bears the weight of the sins of all who would ever believe. God turns his back, as it were, on his Son. For the first time Father and Son experience something of this separation which is indescribable, inexplicable, and he cries out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" quoting Psalm 22:1 to tell us that's what's happening as the sky is dark at 12 noon. God is testifying with the darkness that he has abandoned the sin-bearer for God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

So we see the wrath of God poured out upon the Son. We see his determination to punish every sin. You see, God is just. You see the justice of God on display at the cross. He will leave no sin unpunished. Paul makes this point in Romans 3:25-26 when he says that in the cross Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. That is, he's the one who stands in the way to bear the wrath that belonged to us and he said this is, in part, to demonstrate the righteousness of God because in times past, God passed over sins formerly committed, but now is punishing them. What is he saying? How did God pass over the sins of David? How did God not kill David for what he had done? He was an adulterer and a murderer.

How could God pass over the sins of Abraham, a liar and a deceiver? He passed over those sins because he determined to punish them and mete out his justice in the sin-bearer and he is demonstrating his righteousness, his justice and his wrath most fully at the cross so behold the glory of God.

But it's not just his justice, his righteousness and his wrath, behold his mercy, his compassion and his incredible love. Behold his unimaginable humility as God himself hangs there in our place. Listen to the words he spoke from the cross, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." As he's experiencing the weight of these indescribable agonies that he's going through physically, emotionally, spiritually, he looks down and he sees his mother standing beside John and he says, "Woman, behold your son." He's looking out for her even in this incredible moment of trial.

And I mentioned earlier, the two thieves were cursing him as they hung on the cross. That's what the Gospel writers tell us, a couple of them tell us they were hurling insults at him. But Luke tells us that something happened during those hours on the cross. One of those men who had been hurling insults at him, looking at the way Jesus died in the same way that the Centurion watched the way he died and was changed, this man looks at Jesus whom he formerly had been persecuting and he says, "Will You remember me when you come into Your kingdom?" Watching him die. The glory of God was on full display if you had eyes to see and so this man dying, nearing his last breath says, "Will You remember me? I believe You're coming into a spiritual kingdom. Remember me when You come into the kingdom." And listen to the mercy and kindness of God, "I tell you today you will be with Me in paradise." Snatched at the very moment before he died from hanging over hell, the Savior reaches out and saves him.

Behold the mercy and love and grace of God and what kind of God does this? Jesus had said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." What is God like? The God that we are announcing to the world is a God who lays down his life for his people. Is that good news? It is the best news the world has ever seen and the cross testifies to that. In the cross we see the love of Jesus as he lays down his life. He said, "I am the good shepherd. I lay down My life. No one takes it from Me. I lay it down freely." This is how we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

We see the love of the Son but we also see the love of the Father. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." How hard was it for the Father to send his Son to the cross? What indescribable love motivated God to do that? This is the glory of God shining out from Calvary. This is why the cross is the center and the joy. This is why we sing about the cross, an object of incredible pain and torture yet for the Christian who realizes what God has done for him, has become the greatest treasure. The cross.

To know what God is like, you go to nature, you go to the Bible, you go to Jesus, you go to the cross and, finally, you go to the empty tomb. The tomb of Jesus. The tomb of Jesus is empty. Romans 1:4 says this, Jesus, "His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." That the resurrection of Jesus Christ declares him to be the Son of God with

power. It is the unmistakable, as Jess said earlier, the testimony that every promise that God has made is true. It is the testimony that Jesus, as he has revealed the Father throughout his life, in his cross, that everything he said about the Father is true is proven and stamped by the resurrection. It stamps the whole Bible. It stamps everything that God has said. It's stamped in the resurrection. Every other religion that may have appealing sound to it in some areas, I mean, Satan is a good deceiver, he crafts things in ways that appeal to our flesh. So every other authority that speaks out, Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Joseph Smith, all of these people who speak out yet they are dead and they are buried but the one who said, "I and the Father are one, he who has seen Me has seen the Father," he also said, "I am the resurrection and the life," and he proved it by rising from the dead.

So God has set his seal upon him. If you want to know what God is like, look to Jesus. The most wonderful news in the world that we know with certainty to be true because God has proven it and made it inescapable, as Paul said. He has testified that he's going to judge the world in righteousness and he's appointed a man through whom he's going to judge the world, that is Jesus, and he has proven that he is the Judge, that he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and he's proven that unmistakably by raising him from the dead.

Now, that message cuts two ways. If you repent and place your faith in him, you find him to be an ark of safety, the door of salvation, the entrance into every joy that we could ever hope for, for our sins are covered by his blood. He makes us clean and then he gives us his righteousness so you're not just left not dirty, you're robed in his perfect righteousness, his perfect record of obeying God. It is transferred to the believer. Because he became sin, he gives us his righteousness. If your hope, if you've repented and placed your faith or if you will today repent and place your faith in Jesus, then that is the best news in the world that God is like this and that Jesus is risen from the dead. But if you will not repent and believe and you will go on to death not believing, then he will be your Judge. There is no need to do that. He invites all men, he commands, as the Apostle Paul said, he commands all men to repent. Turn from your sin, turn from living your life for yourself, turn from ruling your life and bow the knee to Jesus and acknowledge him as King of kings and Lord of lords and as your King and your Lord and he will save because he is gentle and lowly of heart. A God who stooped down to wash his disciples' feet is willing to stoop down and wash your sins.

How could you say no to such a glorious God? Living in his home is not like living in North Korea, it's like living in the most wonderful place of love that Christopher Hitchens, if he had any sense, would know that he's always longed for. Jesus has made it known.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, we stand in awe of you and the God that you are. We are amazed at unspeakable mercy, lovingkindness, compassion. We also, Lord, acknowledge your holiness, your justice, your wrath, and we worship you for all that you are, for everything

that you are is right and good. You are holy and we thank you for making a way for sinners like us to be truly made right with you. We pray that you would help everyone in this room to humble themselves before you, those who already know you to just recommit ourselves to you in joy and delight, and those who have not yet repented and believed, Lord, bring them to yourself now. Help them run to Christ and to find in him everything that they've ever longed for. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.