

Our Incomprehensible King

Study in 1 Kings
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If you have your Bibles, open up to 1 Kings 20-22. 1 Kings 20-22. Today is our final week in a series we've been going through for a while, a closer look at the King, and we have been through the entire book of 1 Kings and today we are concluding with the last three chapters. So we've got quite a haul to get through this morning so we're going to have to motor pretty quickly, but it's been a great study. I hope you've really enjoyed going through an entire book of the Bible and being able to see it in its entirety, and we've covered a lot of ground, we've talked about a lot of characters. We've seen a few main characters and a lot of peripheral characters, but ultimately I hope you know that we've only been looking at one real King, we've been looking at the King of kings and Lord of lords, we've been looking at God, the Creator of the world, the one who is our King. So as we look at minor kings, they all pale in comparison to the one true King.

Well, over the last several weeks, we've looked at the character of God, that's our series, "A Closer Look at the King." We've looked at the character of God as revealed in the last section of 1 Kings. So maybe just to remind you real quickly of what we've covered. In 1 Kings 16 and 17, we looked at our faithful King. In 1 Kings 18, we looked at our jealous King. And in 1 Kings 19, last week, we looked at our gracious King. Today we will see three more attributes of our great King, of our God, as revealed in the last three chapters of 1 Kings. So we're not going to be able to spend a large chunk of time in each one of these chapters but each chapter is going to reveal to you a little bit more about the character of our God, of our great King. But one thing we can't fail to do as we look at specific character qualities is to understand or fail to understand that even though God does reveal himself to us, we can never say that we fully understand God or grasp the entirety of his character. How does that settle on you? As I make that statement that all of us to some degree fall short in comprehending the entirety of who God is? Does that settle with you okay or do you struggle with that phrase?

Today we will be learning about the incomprehensibility of God or our incomprehensible God. The idea that even though God is loving enough to reveal himself to us, we can never fully comprehend the greatness of who God is, and if we ever think that we have fully comprehended God, we are just proving how much we still have to learn because that's the moment you've put God in a box. Probably the best word that describes the character of God is holy. That's probably the best word we have in our English dictionary, vocabulary, is the word holy, and holy teaches us the set apartness of God or the otherness of God. So the term we will use today is the incomprehensibility of God or our incomprehensible King.

So let me define incomprehensible for you real quick. It literally means to not be able to understand or not intelligible, but what we are not saying when we use that phrase is we are not saying that we can't know God. So don't hear me today and think, "Man, God is unknowable. He is in the distance somewhere. He's beyond us and we can't know him, therefore, don't try." We can know God and we can understand God as much as he's revealed himself to us, but we do believe that as the creation, that we can't fully or completely grasp in our finite mind the wonder and splendor of God.

I want to use a quick illustration to help you to explain this concept a little bit further. You heard me say that we can't put God in a box. Many times we make a mistake when we try to define God by a single characteristic, so we'll see in a chapter that we looked at like 1 Kings 18, we talked about how God is a jealous King, he is a jealous God, and sometimes we try to put God into a box, we try to figure out a word or a characteristic that would define God, so we'll talk about his faithfulness. I wish I should have learned to juggle in my earlier days. That would have been helpful. Or his grace or he is a gracious God. But instead of allowing all of Scripture to explain his character to us, we try to pick one or find a word that we can encompass God with, and ultimately the problem with defining God by any one word is that any one word limits God and it's not compatible with the vastness of God as revealed throughout the whole Bible.

So in 1 Kings 16 and 17 teaches us about the faithfulness of God, we understand that that doesn't mean that God is only faithful, but we understand and we believe that God is faithful so what we have to do is we have to put the faithfulness box inside of the God box. God is faithful but he is not just faithful so we put faithful into the God box. In chapter 18, we learned about his jealousy, that he is a jealous God, and so that is true, that is accurate, so we understand that God is a jealous God, he wants his name to be proclaimed, he wants his people back, but we understand that you can't just define God with jealousy. So you put jealousy inside the God box. Then in chapters 18 and 19, we learned about his graciousness or his kindness or his love, so we understand that God is gracious but instead of us just defining God as gracious or putting God inside the gracious box, we have to put gracious into the God box. Does that make sense? God is faithful, jealous and gracious, and those three words only scratch the surface of the entirety or the wonder or splendor of who God is.

So today we're going to look at three more characteristics of God and instead of you walking away with one of those and saying, "Okay, I now know who God is. He is

merciful." No, we have to take mercy, merciful, and put that characteristic as God displays that, articulates himself to us, and put that word inside the God box and allow God to be greater and more wonderful and more amazing than we can comprehend. So today instead of taking God and putting him into a box, what we must do is allow God to teach us who he is and what he is like by reading each and every chapter of the Bible which reveals to us the entirety of his character. So when God says he is something, we take that characteristic and put it into the God box instead of putting God into that box. So now let's do this very exercise with our text today. Let's see what God teaches us about himself and allow that knowledge to lead us to worship and cherish him more than we ever have by allowing him to blow our minds with his magnitude and amazement.

So our story today is 1 Kings 20 and 22. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah seems to be the main character of the story, or at least the spotlight is on Elijah. We looked at this last week. In chapters 20 through 22, the spotlight seems to move off of Elijah and moves to Ahab. Ahab is the evil king of the northern tribe of Israel. So for the next three chapters, we're mainly going to look at Ahab, but even though the main character of the story seems to be Ahab, in reality the main character is God. It always is God. God is the main character of the Bible. You see, we will learn more about God in the next three chapters than we will about Ahab. Ahab will become very one-dimensional to us in the next three chapters. He is going to become simple. You're going to be able to put Ahab in a box and the box that you'll put Ahab in is sinful. Where God in the next three chapters will become very three-dimensional to us, or maybe a better way to say that is infinitely dimensional. We're going to learn his vastness and his greatness and his wonder.

So let me give you a real quick overview of the next three chapters. The next three chapters, chapters 20, 21 and 22, there's a lot of content but the beauty of them is they were written very similarly. There is a commonality to the way the next three chapters were written. Even though they're big, even though there's tons of content, lots of information, the author wrote them almost identically. So let me show that to you real quick. 1 Kings 20-22 are really long but they're really amazing interesting stories. The three chapters are different but I hope that you will see that they are all written similarly.

So here's the brief outline for all three chapters. You're going to see in every chapter Israel's evil king, God's prominent word, and God's decisive response. You're going to see the character of the main character, the evil king; you're going to see how God responds to that man, instead of leaving him alone; and then you're going to see God make a decision, do something about the wickedness of the man.

So now let's look briefly at each of these chapters. We're going to move real quick, I promise. We're going to look at each one of these chapters looking for those three things. We're going to look at the evil king, we're going to look at God's prominent word, and God's decisive response and we'll see character traits of God because he is going to respond – here's the spoiler – God is going to respond differently in each chapter. The first two are going to stay the same primarily: evil king, God's word, but then his response is going to be different in each chapter which teaches us the greatness and wonder of who he is or the incomprehensibility of who he is.

Alright, are you ready to move? Here we go. 1 Kings 20. I apologize for summarizing. There's just no other way to do it. I would really encourage you to go home this week and to look deeper into these texts. You're going to have to take my word for this a little bit, but you have your text in front of you so you can check up on me and make sure I'm going along.

Alright, 1 Kings 20. The main theme we learn from 1 Kings 20 is that God's mercy is always undeserved and surprising. 1 Kings 20, God's mercy. So let's look at Israel's evil king. Israel's evil king is Ahab. Ahab is forced with a terrible problem in chapter 20, Ben-hadad is the king of Syria and Ben-hadad has assembled a huge army and he's going to destroy the nation of Israel and plunder everything good that they have. He has assembled an enormous army, he's going to take everything, but before attacking, Ben-hadad meets with Ahab in order to give him an opportunity to surrender instead of to fight. So we're going to have a meeting, I'm going to tell you I'm going to destroy you and take everything, whatever I want. I'm going to take the best of everything. You want to fight or do you want to just wave the white flag? That's the story. Ahab reveals his poor character by so quickly folding to the intimidation of Ben-hadad. Ahab promises Ben-hadad he can have whatever he wants if Syria won't destroy Israel. That's poor character because what Ahab should have done is trust God in the promises of God to care for his people.

So instead of running to God and trusting God to care for and deliver his people, Ahab runs to his unwise elders who tell him, "Just be confident. Fight. Go to war with Ben-hadad. We'll win. We're tough. We're strong." God in his mercy, this is unbelievable here, God in his mercy allows Israel and Ahab to win this battle with insurmountable odds. There's no chance they should have won this war, but they do win. They win the victory even though they are vastly outnumbered and they are living very ungodly lives. Like, God shouldn't have granted them victory. He should have annihilated them, wiped them out. That's what they deserved. In spite of Israel, God fights for Israel. That is what we call mercy.

Here's God's prominent word, here's where God sees the sinfulness of man and speaks into the sin. We hear about an unnamed prophet. We're not even told his name. Following the first victory, God sends his word to them through an unnamed prophet to Ahab and tells them, "Don't worry," because God will be merciful to wicked Ahab again and grant them a second victory against Ben-hadad that he doesn't deserve. So Ben-hadad loses the first war. He's kind of confused so they have a meeting, they reconfigure. They're like, "Ah, here's the problem. We attacked by the hills. We need to go through the valley. That's the weakness. That's the problem. If we just attack differently, then we'll win," right?

So Ben-hadad reassembles the troops. God goes to Ahab through an unnamed prophet and says, "Don't you worry. God will be merciful to you. He will grant you a second victory." But even after God grants Israel a second victory over Syria which is complete mercy, instead of Ahab repenting and worshipping God for his kindness, Ahab continues

to play political games by making a covenant with Ben-hadad instead of destroying him. So Ben-hadad is in possession, Ahab takes him captive. Ben-hadad loses two wars in a row. Ben-hadad was now standing in front of Ahab. Ahab has an opportunity to get rid of Syria, the Syrian king, put to death the enemy of God, and instead of Ahab putting to death Ben-hadad like he should have, he makes a covenant with Ben-hadad and instead of Israel returning back to a nation that serves and worship God alone, they become a nation who continues to make compromises and political moves in order to gain power instead of trusting and believing that God alone is in charge.

So where is God's decisive response in chapter 20? It's with how the chapter ends. The chapter ends with God making a prophecy that because Ahab was unwilling to kill Ben-hadad, he will one day lose his life instead of Ben-hadad, and his people, Ahab's people, will lose their lives in the place of Ben-hadad's people. So what was God's response? I think if we were to summarize God's response as a whole from chapter 20 it would be mercy. You see, God did not give Ahab what he deserved. Instead of destroying them for their sin and unfaithfulness, he spared them and allowed them to win two amazing victories that they never should have won, that they didn't have a chance in.

So they remained in the land and then even when God does prophesy against Ahab, there is no immediate action taken and Ahab is allowed to live. It's a terrible mistake, horrific mistake on Ahab's part. He fails. He fails morally. He fails spiritually. He's a horrible king and chapter 20 ends with him still on the throne, Israel still thriving, Israel still living life as if things never happened. So here's the conclusion: God is our merciful King. We learn in chapter 20 another characteristic of God, that God is a merciful King.

You hear this definition a lot, right, that God is merciful, that God is a loving and merciful God who desires to bless his people and bless your life, and this description of God is 100% true. He is a merciful God, but it isn't complete. The characteristic that God is merciful does not completely summarize who God is so we can't just put God in the merciful box, that he overlooks our sin, he doesn't hold us accountable, he lets things go, even when we fail him he's okay with it. We can't put God in that box so we must take the character of God that we have learned in chapter 20 and put it into the God box instead of putting God into the mercy box. So we put mercy back into the character of what we've learned about God.

Do you know Romans 2:4? It says this, "Do not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience." Don't presume on his kindness. Don't learn about the kindness of God and then expect it. Don't hear that God is a merciful God and then think, "I'm fine. He's merciful. I'm a big sinner. He likes to forgive. That's a great combination. Let's just keep going with that." No, do not presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, "not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance." He is kind, he is merciful, but that's not the entirety of his character because we've got two more chapters.

Chapter 21, 1 Kings 21. In chapter 21, we learn that God's justice is always informed and deserving. God's justice is always informed and deserving. Here's the story about this

one. Israel's wicked king, still Ahab. Still wicked. Ahab sees a plot of land near his palace that he wants for a vegetable garden. Somebody owns this, Naboth owns it, but he wants it. He thinks it would make a great vegetable garden so he goes to the owner of the vineyard, Naboth, to purchase or trade for it. Naboth declines the offer and his reason is because of God's law that he must keep property that God has blessed him with as a reminder of God's kindness in your life. So if God gave you property, you don't sell it to make profit, you keep it as a reminder of God's kindness to you. The only exception was to sell property if you were in dire straits, like if you were going to die or you could sell the property. That was the only reasoning you were allowed to get rid of property that God gave you, otherwise keep it because of God's kindness upon your life.

Ahab is very upset that Naboth won't take the offer. He goes into his bedroom and cries like a big baby. Ahab's wicked wife, Jezebel, sees him moping and tells him to man up, "Go take the vineyard! Aren't you the king? Do what you want, little boy. Man up, go take the vineyard." She then decides a better plan, she then tells Ahab, "I'll solve your problem. Don't worry about this, Ahab, you keep crying. I'll solve your problems."

So Jezebel, being crafty and crazy, Jezebel creates a fake trial and has Naboth accused of blasphemy against the king and against God, which is hilarious that Naboth's crime is blasphemy in a nation who at this point cares very little about blasphemy, about living for God, for obeying God. But anyway, that's Naboth's accusation. There are two false witnesses who accuse him of this and bring evidence before him, and Naboth is stoned to death for his crime even though he's completely innocent. Jezebel then returns to Ahab, tells him the good news that the property is now vacant. "Go, take the vineyard. Make it your vegetable garden. You'll be happy again. Go possess the land that you wanted. Enjoy it."

Then here is the prominent word of God. Our good old buddy, Elijah, remember him? The prophet of God? He receives word from God and is told to go to Ahab and tell Ahab of his guilt in the story. So Ahab was just crying in his bedroom, but Elijah goes to Ahab and tells Ahab he's guilty of murder. This is brilliant. This is a very Nathan and David moment. Do you remember that? The prophet goes to David, scolds him for his guilt in this whole process. Very similar moment. Elijah knows the entirety of the story, even though only Ahab and Jezebel would have known the circumstances. It's brilliant, which proves this is a direct judgment from God, that God knows, God sees and God holds responsibility. The justice of God.

God's decisive response. Elijah then announces the just judgment that God is going to bring upon wicked Ahab for this horrible sin of murdering an innocent man. Look at verses 21 of chapter 21, it says this, "Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel the LORD also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.' Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat."

Isn't this a much harsher response than we saw in chapter 20? God is just. He's angry. He sees guilt and he's going to hold people responsible.

So in chapter 20, the conclusion is that we see a God who knows all things, a God who sees all things, and a God who holds people accountable for the wrong that they do. A just Judge. This chapter teaches us the justice of God. God is a just Judge who will hold people accountable for their wrongs. Isn't this interesting because in chapter 20 we learned about the mercy and kindness of God and now in chapter 21 we learn about the justice and anger of God. So we hear about this word a lot today too, that God is a just God. We hear this a lot. There's a lot of fear over God or a lot of maybe skepticism over God. "Why would you serve and worship that God?" He's just a just Judge. That's all he is. But his justice is confusing to us many times because we also believe that God is merciful so we don't know how to balance the two, he's just but he's also merciful, those two don't always seem to go together.

So does God give us what we deserve or does God let us off the hook? Does God see everything we do and hold us responsible or does he not see everything we do and let things slide? This is exactly where chapter 21 leaves us, with this dilemma because you see Ahab at the end of chapter 21 running to penance and mourning, and again we see a God who is kind to repentant people. That's Ahab's response at the end of chapter 21. He says, "I will give you what you deserve, destruction. I'm going to bring you down, Ahab, but it won't happen yet. Judgment is coming, Ahab, you're toast, you're done, but I see your repentance or your penance. I see your remorse. I see that so I'm going to prolong my justice."

So what did we learn in chapter 21? That God is our just King. This description of God has to also be true. He is a just Judge but it still limits God if we try to put God into this box, that he's only just. He is just but he's not only just. Instead we must take the character of God that we have learned in chapter 21 and put it into our God box instead of putting God into the justice box.

One more chapter. We're moving. We're doing alright. We're doing okay. Chapter 22, are you ready? One more story. What we learn from chapter 22 is God's wrath, okay, it's escalating here a little bit. Chapter 22, God's wrath is always devastating and precise. Here we go. King Ahab, still the wicked king of Israel. He's still ruling and reigning. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, okay, we've got a lot of names here. I need to map out all of our characters. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat. Who is Jehoshaphat? Jehoshaphat is the king of Judah. Remember the divided kingdom? Ahab is the king of the north, Jehoshaphat is the king of the south. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, "Hey, I need some advice. I want to take back Ramoth-gilead," which was a property that they deserved from Ben-hadad. So they obliterated, chapter 20, they defeat Ben-hadad two times. Ben-hadad should have given back everything that he took but instead he kept a property called Ramoth-gilead. He should have given it back but he didn't so now Ahab goes to Jehoshaphat and says, "Shouldn't we take back Ramoth-gilead? Like it's our property. Ben-hadad didn't give it to us, what should we do?" Jehoshaphat being the wiser, more spiritual leader of Israel, says to Ahab, "Shouldn't we seek wisdom from God?" Wouldn't that be common sense?

"Shouldn't we talk to God and ask the prophets whether or not this is a good idea? Like maybe instead of just making our own decisions, don't you think it would be a good idea to ask God what he thinks?" Unfortunately Ahab has surrounded himself with false prophets so this isn't very helpful, and the false prophets only tell him what he wants to hear. So Ahab goes to his false prophets and asks them, "What should we do?" And they're like, "What do you want to do?" "I think I want to take out Ramoth-gilead." "Well, then I think you should too. It's a great idea. God will grant you success."

Jehoshaphat is like, "Really?" He sees right through this and challenges Ahab and says, "Ahab, aren't there any prophets who actually hear from God instead of just telling you what you want to hear? Aren't there any of those guys?" And Ahab's response is hilarious, "Yeah, he's name is Micaiah and I hate him because he doesn't tell me what I want to hear." It's just like pure comedy. God is hilarious. I love it, "And I hate him. He's a jerk. He won't do what I tell him to do."

So enter Micaiah. Here's the prominent word of God. Ahab then goes to Micaiah who's the only remaining true prophet of God in Israel, and Micaiah mocks Ahab by responding like one of the false prophets and Ahab gets mad, "No, don't you mock me. Tell me the truth." And Micaiah is like, "Okay, okay." So he says, "You want to know the truth? Yeah, I don't think you can handle the truth but here's the truth: the wrath of God is coming for you. You are toast. God is so mad at you. He's so angry at you. You'd better not go to war, Ahab, or you're going to die in battle. You want to go to this fight? Fine. Good luck. You're going to die." This is the response he says. In verse 23 he says, "the LORD has declared disaster for you, Ahab." But instead of listening to Micaiah, Ahab insists on war.

He wants that property, but Ahab's clever, he's a smart little guy. So Ahab disguises himself as just a normal warrior. He hops on a chariot. He's just a normal dude even though he's the king. He hops on a normal chariot because he knows Ben-hadad, he knows Ben-hadad is a tough player and he knows that Ben-hadad will go for the kings. He's going to go for the leadership. So Ahab's like, "I'm just going to dress like a normal guy. I'll shoot some arrows, stab some people. They'll never expect that I'm the king."

So he tries to fool Ben-hadad and goes into war knowing that Syria will probably ignore the smaller fights if possible, and here's God's decisive response: in this chapter we see the wrath of God but like we've already learned, God knows all things and sees all things, right? Ahab thinks he can hide from Ben-hadad, and he's right, can Ahab hide from God? No. Look at verse 34. Beautiful. Absolutely brilliant. Verse 34 of chapters 22, "But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate." Do you hear that wording? Some random pulls a bow and it perfectly hits the bulls-eye. The wrath of God. Ahab can't hide. Ahab's not alone. He's not smart. He's not clever. God knows exactly what's happening and God's wrath is being dropped on Ahab.

So Ahab is taken on a chariot outside the city where he bleeds to death and the dogs lick up his blood just as was prophesied. God's plan is happening. You can't hide from God.

So what is the conclusion to chapter 22? God is our wrathful King. Those of us who oppose God, all sinners, we will receive the devastating and precise wrath of God here on earth or for an eternity or both. Do you know Romans 11:33? It says, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" You see, the last characteristic that we've got to know and understand about God and the one that I think we like the least is his wrath, that God is a wrathful God, a God of anger, a God of punishment, and this characteristic of God has to also be true because of what we learn in the Scripture, and as true as this characteristic of God is, we also know that we have to understand this characteristic in light of what we've learned about his mercy and his justice because those are true as well. So instead of putting God in the wrathful box, which some have, right? They learn about the reality of hell, what the Bible teaches about hell and they're like, "That's all God is. He's just a wrathful God." Instead of putting God in the wrathful box, we have to take what we've learned about wrath, that he is a wrathful God, and put it inside of the God box to continue to help us learn about the character of God, who he is, what he demands, what he is like, so that we can understand him more fully yet still balance the reality that he is incomprehensible.

There's our stories. Can I try to summarize all of this for us and try to pull it all together and hopefully even summarize all of 1 Kings for you? That's my desire so let's summarize the sermon. I think there are three things we need to learn, three things we can learn about God from our text today. First, is the one dimensionalness of man, sinful. In this room are very one-dimensional people, sinners. How does that settle on you? That's the description of you from the word of God. You're one-dimensional. The more I learn about you, the more you learn about me, the more sinful I become. Ask my wife. That's true about you as well. We are very one-dimensional people, sinful, but we also learn about the multi-dimensionalness of God. The more you learn about God, the more amazing he becomes, the more staggering, the more brilliant, the more beautiful he becomes. Just in the last seven chapters, this is what we've learned about God: he is merciful; he's just; he's wrathful; he's jealous; he's gracious. Like all of these characteristics of God have been poured out upon us in seven chapters. This is who God is. He's all of these and so we can't pick and choose the one chapter we like and say, "I like the merciful God. I'm going to camp in chapter 20." You can't do that. We have to be willing to study and know God in his entirety. You see, if you put God in a box, you only limit his beauty and majesty and you'll ultimately miss the wonder of the cross. If you pick one word that you like about God, then the cross is gone because the cross encompasses them all. The beauty of what happened to Jesus encompasses the entirety of the character of God.

2. The word of God is always prominent and accurate. God's word is always prominent, always has been, and it's always accurate. You see, every time we are faced with the sinfulness of man in the Bible, we always then interact with the word of God. Isn't that beautiful? Every time you see corrupt man, God is speaking into the situation instead of running from the situation. God never runs away from sinful humanity. He always speaks into it. He is always present and active. In the darkest parts of the Bible, and there are

some dark parts, God is there speaking into it, speaking to it, judging it, condemning it. He's always present and it's always 100% accurate and it's true today.

The last thing I think we learn is the plan of God is always being fulfilled. God's plan, even in this story with an evil king, God's plan is always being fulfilled and his plan is never man-dependent. That's why you can have an evil king Ahab on the throne of Israel for years because God's plan is not man-dependent. God is the King. He's in charge.

Notice how the rest, we didn't look at this, but look at how the rest of chapter 22 ends. Ahab's no longer on the throne. He's dead. There come different kings who begin to sit on the throne of Israel, but the beauty of God is that sinful man is unable to mess up the plan of God no matter how wicked and sinful they are. Just wait until we get to 2 Kings. It's a ton of wicked kings and God's plan is never deterred. And it is the connection between those three things that I just taught you, those three points, that bring us to the Gospel today. It's the beauty of what we tried to learn today that helps us see the beauty of the Gospel. You see sinful man, that's all of us, are faced everyday with the accurate word of God, guilty. That's the prominence of the word of God. Sinful man, we're a lot like Ahab, evil king, sinful men like us, are always faced with the accurate word of God, our guilt, and our only hope in life and death is the decisive response of God. That's our only chance is that God would respond in our favor, that he would do something for us, and he did, it's called the cross. That's our only chance, is that God would move towards us.

Let me word this another way and then put it into a take-home truth. Let me summarize what we've learned today and boil it down into a couple of sentences. Here it is, here is our take-home truth: in every way God is indescribable and incomprehensible but also loving enough to be personal and knowable. That's why I said at the beginning I don't want you to think that God is distant so give up, don't even try. No, he's given you his word. He is personal and he is knowable and it's the same God who created us, is the same God who became like us in order to save us. This is the Gospel. The God that created the world, who has complete right and privilege and freedom to destroy us, to bring judgment because he's just and to bring his wrath because we're guilty, is the same God who moved towards us by becoming like us in order to save us in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the Gospel.

You see, our incomprehensible King is so loving or merciful that he sent his Son to die for us. Our incomprehensible King is so just that Christ had to die in order to save us. And our incomprehensible King is so wrathful that Christ had to endure the horribleness of being forsaken in order to redeem us. All three of these character qualities are in the Gospel story. John 1, if you know the story of John 1, it's a beautiful text that summarizes for us the incomprehensibility of God in the person of Jesus Christ. My hope and my prayer for you is that you will see the beauty of God but also rest in knowing his love and his tremendous desire for you.

Let me read John 1 for you. It says this, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him

was life, and the life was the light of men." Verse 14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

You see, I hope today doesn't frustrate you, the bigness, the amazement, the incomprehensibility. I hope that doesn't frustrate you. My great hope for you is that it causes you to worship because if God is like you, simple, one-dimensional, why worship him if he's like you? But because God is incomprehensible, amazing, wonderful, majestic, then he's worthy of worship. And the greatest thing Christ has ever done for you was sent his Son to endure the just and the wrath of God that you deserve. That's why Christ is your substitute.

Today enjoy the bigness of God, the vastness of God. Treasure and cherish the word of God, its prominence and its accuracy. Don't camp on a certain character of God because you only limit him. Enjoy the breadth and the width and the bigness of who God is and ultimately you will find the beauty of the cross more than you've ever seen, that Christ would die for a sinner like me.

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