

SERIES: **Recovering Awe**

Psalms 33:8 Let the whole earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

TITLE: **God is Incomprehensible**

INTRIGUE

Communicable attributes are those which God shares with mankind (love, justice, generosity)

Incommunicable attributes are those exclusive to God (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence)

Gavin- this is one of God's incommunicable attributes

Me- no

Gavin- how so?

Me- I am certain every husband finds their wife incomprehensible

God's Incomprehensibility- *In His essence and totality, God cannot be fully understood or comprehended by human beings.*

The Ocean- We are somewhat familiar with it- we're Californians! (going to the beach)

- The ocean covers over 71% of the Earth's surface and holds about 97% of all Earth's water
- Despite centuries of exploration, less than 10% of the world's ocean has been mapped in high resolution, and only about 5% has been explored by humans.
 - Scientists often note we have better maps of Mars and the Moon's surfaces than we do of our own seafloor.
- Around 226,000 marine species are currently known, but estimates suggest that hundreds of thousands to millions more species have yet to be discovered and studied.

For all our familiarity with the ocean, we haven't even scratched the surface of understanding it

Psalms 95:4-5 The depths of the earth are in his hand, and the mountain peaks are his.

⁵The sea is his; he made it. His hands formed the dry land.

Nehemiah 9:6 You, LORD, are the only God. You created the heavens, the highest heavens with all their stars, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, and all the stars of heaven worship you.

I want to do 3 things this morning-

(credit to Jeremy Marshall, whose work I leaned on for some of the direction for this sermon)

- 1. What it means to us that God is incomprehensible**
- 2. Wrong ways to respond to God's incomprehensibility**
- 3. How we can still know a God we can't fully comprehend**

INSIGHT

1. *WHAT IT MEANS TO US THAT GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE*

Specifically what does it mean for us, creatures made in His image who are seeking to know Him?

When we say that God is incomprehensible, we don't mean that as one of His character traits amongst many.

It means **every aspect of His nature is incomprehensible to us!**

What does this mean???

You think you fully understand the love of God? You don't. Not even close. It's incomprehensible!
His justice, His wrath, His jealousy, His omniscience, His grace, His mercy-
all of who He is, is incomprehensible.

Does this mean we can't know anything about Him? No.

But it does mean **we aren't CAPABLE of completely knowing everything about Him.**

Psalms 145:3 The Lord is great and is highly praised; his greatness is unsearchable.

God is great so worship Him-

but because He IS great, and we are not, we don't have the capacity to fully comprehend Him
-Even if you tried! (which is why many of us grow frustrated in our relationship with God)

Job 36:26 Yes, God is exalted beyond our knowledge;
the number of his years cannot be counted.

We don't have the bandwidth to handle the full knowledge of God

Job 11:7-9 Can you fathom the depths of God or discover the limits of the Almighty?

⁸They are higher than the heavens—what can you do? They are deeper than Sheol—
what can you know? ⁹Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.

It would be silly to think a snail could comprehend the housing market...

But beyond that, we can't grasp him, **not only because of our limitations** as finite creatures,
but also because **God has hidden many things from us**

Deuteronomy 29:29 The hidden things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and
our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also put eternity in their
hearts, but no one can discover the work God has done from beginning to end.

He places eternity in our hearts, and reveals things for us to grasp, but He is *also* the one who
places the boundaries on us that *limit* what we can know.

AND **God has hidden Himself from us**

1 Timothy 6:15-16 God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign,
the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable
light, whom no one has seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

For all we know about God, it is simply what He has allowed us to know

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How
unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways!

You can't hunt more than the footprints He's left for us

"The incomprehensibility of God seems almost determined to push us away from God."- Jeremy Marshall

Does God's incomprehensibility mean that He doesn't want to be known??? No.

It shows us that despite our limitations, God in His kindness has revealed as much of Himself to us
as we can know

2. THREE WRONG WAYS TO RESPOND TO GOD'S INCOMPREHENSIBILITY

UNBELIEF- *Rejecting the possibility of a God they can't fully grasp*

- Agnostics- *how can I be certain of something I can't comprehend?*
- Atheists- *I am certain God cannot exist since I cannot comprehend*

Some just refuse to humble themselves before a God they can't comprehend.

They think they are being wise (this is their boast), but the Bible says-

Psalm 14:1 *The fool says in his heart, "There's no God."...*

In discarding God, they discard any certainty for moral order or justice or absolute truth.

There is no real right and wrong (all subjective)

That means abusers, oppressors, and predators who got away with their injustice in this life will never be held to account if there is no God.

MYSTICISM- *Divinity must be disconnected from the physical world & uninterested in people*

- They deny the personal nature of God
The wrath of God? That's just karma and consequences
The love of God? That's just the universe sending good frequencies

In stripping the relational involvement of a personal God for individual sinners, expressed through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, they end up undermining the gospel.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

IDOLATRY- *An attempt to have a God that is tame & predictable, which mankind can fully comprehend*

- The Israelites encountered an incomprehensible God (Egypt's plagues, Mt Sinai's cloud & thunder)But that's not the God they wanted.

Even though it was the incomprehensible God who had rescued them through His incomprehensible wonders, they were willing to settle for gods they made with their own hands. A god they could domesticate and control, and fully comprehend.

Isaiah 55:8-9 *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways." This is the Lord's declaration. ⁹"For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

- People still trade the Incomprehensible God for one they can tame into their own theology
They Frankenstein together an idol, not out of gold, but from their favorite worship songs that are theologically absurd, from Bible verses lifted out of context, and from their selfish desires.
If you can comprehend God, it's not God you're comprehending- you've made an idol

Any God we can comprehend is too small, too powerless, and too much like us to save us.

3. HOW WE CAN STILL KNOW A GOD WE CAN'T FULLY COMPREHEND

Just because we can't fully comprehend God does not mean we cannot truly know God

God is too big and we're too small- yet He desires that we would know Him!

In a holy grace that is beyond my comprehension, God chose to stoop low and make Himself known

Jeremiah 9:24a But the one who boasts should boast in this: **that he understands and knows me...**

So there is a sense, that the unknowable God has made Himself known, and the incomprehensible God has deposited enough knowledge of Himself for us to be able to grasp!

The pressing question is- HOW?

- **God reveals Himself through Creation**

Romans 1:20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, **being understood through what he has made**. As a result, people are without excuse.

You can learn quite a bit about the God who made it all by studying the works of his hands. The seas roaring in might, yet restrained. The spider delicately spinning her web. The mountain peaks high above and the waterfalls crushing down. The stars and the molecules.

- **God reveals Himself through the Bible**

2 Timothy 3:15 and you know that from infancy you have known **the sacred Scriptures**, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Through studying and meditating on the scriptures, we learn the attributes of God, and we learn of his mighty acts of salvation for his people.

- **God reveals Himself through His Son, Jesus the Christ**

Colossians 1:15 **He is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation.

Colossians 1:19-20 For God was pleased to have **all his fullness dwell in him**,²⁰ and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

In Jesus, we see the fullness of God, who humbles Himself to save us; who secured to the certainty of our salvation to make us holy and in right standing with Him; who defeats death, sin, and satan, and promises us the victory in Him.

We can truly know a God we cannot fully comprehend

INSPIRATION

Remember we said God is like an ocean- imagine that you and I are glasses (cups) that hold ocean water.

We can recognize there is far more beyond our understanding, and yet still know to some degree

The question then before us is this: ***Have we grasped as much of God as He has given us?***

If we are like glasses, are we overflowing, or settled at half-full?

“We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?” - Alexander MacLaren

“We have as much of God as we actually want.” - AW Tozer

The Psalmist said of His relationship with God- **Psalm 23:5c ...my cup overflows.**

**MAIN TAKEAWAY- We can never fully comprehend God- that is helpful insight,
but we can truly know God- that is good news!**

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

INVITATION

KNOW GOD

- **Marvel at His *Creation***
- **Meditate on the *Bible* in prayer**
- **Magnify *Christ* in your highs and lows**
- **Meet Him as the *Savior* of your soul**

The more you know God, you always find out you knew less about him than you thought you did.

But that's when you stop trying to comprehend God,
and start simply praising God, and delighting in God, and resting in God.

BULPEN-

Job 26:13-14 By his breath the heavens gained their beauty; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.

¹⁴These are but the fringes of his ways; how faint is the word we hear of him!

Who can understand his mighty thunder?

Job 42:3 You asked, “Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?”

Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know.

Think about that- there is much we do know about God, but there is far, far more we don't know

God invites us freely to know him and his ways through the works of his hands, through the words of scripture, and through his Living Word, Jesus Christ.