

Good morning! We are in the final week of our series on hymns. The first week we talked about the greatness of God and how He reveals his greatness in creation, his wisdom, and his greatness in his love and grace. The second week we talked about building our life on the solid rock of Jesus. Last week we talked about worship is and what worship isn't and how we need to be authentic in our worship of God. For this last week I received several requests of songs that people wanted me to use for my messages. Some people wanted really old hymns and others wanted very famous hymns. I took all that into consideration along with the season that we are in and I thought about doing a Christmas carol this week but it just didn't feel right. If you remember the first week that I introduced this series I mentioned the album that was the inspiration for this series and it was called, "Hymns: Ancient and Modern." The first two weeks we talked about more ancient hymns. Last week was a newer song and this week will be the newest song out of all of them. Today's message is inspired by the song, "Our God" by Chris Tomlin.

Chris Tomlin was getting ready for a conference called Passion in 2010. The Passion conference is a gathering of college aged students in America. They get together for a weekend of messages, singing and fellowship. Chris wanted to do something new, something fresh at this conference. They had been doing it for several years so when the team got together to plan the conference a group of musicians got together to talk about new song ideas. One of the other musicians was sitting at a piano playing a chorus that he had written. The chorus is the chorus to the song "Our God". When Chris heard the chorus he knew that this could be a very special song. He sat down and he put the verses together for the song. The song has become very powerful in the church today. In fact it became the #1 song on Christian radio in America. The song talks about "Our" God. This is what I want to talk to you about today is "Our" God.

There are many gods in this world. Various religions have their own god that they all worship. But even more are the things that we have turned in to gods. I recently read a book *gods at war* that talked about this and how we have taken our daily life and daily things we do in life and have turned them into gods in our life. This book went on to talk about how the gods we have created in our life are weak. These gods they don't help us. They really can't help us because they are just things. Eventually they will all let us down and fail us. It doesn't matter if you have made money your god, if you have made a relationship your god, or if you have made possessions your god, all of these things will eventually fade away. You are left standing there with nothing to show for it. Today I want to talk about "Our" God, the God of the Christian faith.

When you compared God to the gods of this world, what is the one thing that really stands out? What is the one thing that really separates God from all the other gods in this world? For me the one thing is that God desires a relationship with us. We get to be with God, spend time with God. So today I want to talk to you about this phrase "with God".

Number one, with God we are unbeatable. There is a story in the Old Testament that illustrates this idea of being unbeatable with God. Actually there are many stories, but there is one in particular that I am thinking of today. This particular story is found in the book of Judges. At this time the Israelites were being oppressed by the country of Midian. This oppression had been going on for seven years. Finally the people of Israel repented and cried out to God for help. God decided to choose a man named Gideon to be the leader of the Israelites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon to tell him of God selecting him, Gideon was surprised that God would choose someone from the weakest tribe of Israel. Gideon even tells the angel that he is the least of all the people in his father's family. He couldn't understand why God would choose him of all people to lead Israel. That is one of the great things about God, He selects the least of things to make great. Even though Gideon does not want to be the leader of Israel he is willing to do it if God can show him how he can save Israel from Midian.

Judges 6:11-18 "Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress to hide it from the Midianites.

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of

valor.” And Gideon said to him, “Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?”

And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

And the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?”

And he said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.”

And the LORD said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” And he said to him, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

Please do not depart from here until I come to you and bring out my present and set it before you.”

And he said, “I will stay till you return.”

Did you catch what God said to Gideon in verse 16, “And the Lord said to him, but I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man.” God tells Gideon that he will be with him in the battle. God is going to be with Gideon. He is not going to have to fight by himself. In chapter 7 we find Gideon selecting the army that is going to fight against the Midianites. The Bible tells us that Gideon started out with an army of 32,000 men. Here's what happens in chapter 7:2-3,

“The Lord said to Gideon, ‘The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, my own hand has saved me.

Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home and hurry away from Mt. Gilead.’ Then 22,000 of the people returned, and 10,000 remained.”

Gideon starts with this large army of 32,000 men but turns out 22,000 of them are afraid to go into battle. They run away from the army so Gideon's army is now down to 10,000 men. But even 10,000 was too many for God's liking. God is still saying that if they win with 10,000 men that the people are still going to think that they did it with their own hand. In order to fix that, God instructs Gideon to take the men down to the river and have them drink from the river. God said that the men who are lapping the water like a dog, putting their face in the water are to go home. The men who scoop the water up with their hands and drink from their hands are the men that Gideon will take in to battle. The number of those men who drank from their hands was 300. So I'm sure Gideon is looking at his army of 300 and wondering what in the world God is going to do. He comes from an army of 32,000 to an army of 300 in a matter of a day but Gideon held on to the promise that God was with him. That night Gideon looked out from the mountain over the army of the Midianites. The Bible doesn't tell us how many soldiers were in the army of the Midianites but it tells us that the people were like locusts in abundance and the number of their camels were like the sand on the seashore. But that night God took his 300 man army and completely defeated the army of the Midianites.

We serve and worship the same God that spoke to Gideon. The same God that told Gideon, “I will be with you” is the same God that is with us today. What is it that you are facing in your life that you think is hopeless? What battles are you facing that you don't think you can win? Do you think there is no way that you can overcome the challenges in your life? This story illustrates to us that with God we are unbeatable. God doesn't want us to live a defeated life. He doesn't want us walking around with our heads hanging low saying, “Woe is me” or “Poor me, my life is so hard”. God wants us to live in victory. He wants us to have victory over the sin in our life. He wants us to have victory over the stress and anxiety over our life.

Number two, with God we are secure. David is one of the most well-known Bible characters who lived a pretty interesting life. He went from shepherd boy to king of the nation. He defeated lions, bears, and giants. He served the king, was best friends with the king's son, but not everything was perfect in David's life. The same king that he served became jealous of him and wanted to kill him. When David became king his own son wanted to take the kingdom away from him and he had enemies at every corner of his life. With all of these things that happened in David's life, he still was able to write this in **Psalm 27:1-3,**

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.

Though an army and camp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident." In these three verses David is expressing ultimate confidence in God. David knew that he was secure in God. God was his salvation. He is ours as well.

In these verses we see that God is our light. What does light do to darkness? It makes the darkness go away. You walk into your house at night and turn on the light, well it is no longer dark in your house. The same goes for our life. When we turn on the light that is God the darkness of doubt disappears. The darkness of fear is replaced with knowing that we really have nothing to be afraid of. The darkness of desperation turns into the light of hope. The darkness of worry is replaced with the peace of God. God is our salvation.

He saves us from sin and the power of sin. He saves us from spiritual death. When we believe in God we no longer have to fear what happens to our soul when we die. God saves us from a hopeless existence. Without God our life is pretty meaningless. We are just wandering the earth with nothing to look forward to but with God we have heaven to look forward to.

God is our protection. In these verses David is talking about how God has protected him from his enemies. He talks about his adversaries and the evildoers who are trying to eat his flesh but David knows that it is going to be his enemies that fall. He knows that even though there is an army against him, he has no reason to fear because God is his stronghold. While you may not have physical enemies like David, I don't know anyone in this church that is fighting against an army and I don't know anybody that has a king who wants to kill them. If you do, now would be the time to fill out your 'my voice card' and ask for prayer or contact the prayer chain.

We all face some sort of enemy in our life. Our enemy may not be human but we all face temptation. Temptation is the enemy of all Christians. God can protect you from the temptation. He can help you battle your temptations. Another enemy that we face is weakness. Not only are we tempted but we are also weak and give in to that temptation. Another enemy that Christians face is complacency where we become stagnant in our walk with God. Have you ever seen a pond that has become stagnant where there has been no movement of the water? It becomes gross. The water becomes dirty. The life of the pond is eventually drained. It usually smells like rotting fish and other rotten smells. When the Christian life becomes this way it begins to rot. Instead of being a sweet smell for people to be drawn to, it pushes them away. Christians also can suffer from a lack of faith, the enemy of faithlessness. When that happens we begin to doubt God and his ability to protect us.

All of these problems that can affect Christians come from one source. They come from our enemy Satan. Satan loves to tempt Christians. He loves to find our weaknesses. He loves to see us become complacent in our walk with Christ and celebrates when we have a lack of faith. The thing is Satan is not stronger than God. If we hold on to God and the promises of God we can be protected from Satan. **1 John 4:1-4** says,

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. God is greater than Satan. One of the other things is that God will protect us from dangers in life.

I want to tell you about a story of some missionaries in Angola on the continent of Africa. In 2002, a family of four arrived in war-torn Angola. Because of the war they lived on a bible school compound that was protected by armed guards. One night they were unable to sleep so they began to pray. About 1AM they had finally fallen asleep only to be woken up by another missionary pounding on their door telling them that one of their guards had been shot by armed bandits. They were able to get the guard to the hospital where he was treated for his injuries and survived but their safety from the armed bandits was still

in doubt. As the weeks past the family would check each night to make sure that their house was locked and they would look out their windows to make sure that there wasn't anything unusual. They were worried about an attack from the armed bandits. This went on for several weeks with the threat of being attacked at any time but the attack never came. They wondered why this never happened and how they were protected. Sometime later they found out from one of the enemies that there were five big guards that they described as not normal around the compound, one at each entrance. This scared the enemies off and protected the compound. The missionaries could only assume that these 5 guards were angels sent by God to protect them. They were able to continue serving God in Angola.

The third and final point, with God anything is possible. I want to make a clarification of what this does not mean. This does not mean that God will do whatever we want or give us whatever we want. He is not to be treated as a genie in a bottle granting our every wish. We can't say, "I believe in God so I am going to get everything I always wanted." That's not what I am talking about here. God is able to provide a way for us to know Him.

We are here in the Christmas season and this is the time that we celebrate Jesus birth. Do you stop and take the time to reflect on the miracle of Jesus' birth? Let's read a short section of the birth story.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Did you catch what Mary asked? Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen I'm a virgin?" Mary wants to know how that can happen. The angel informs Mary that nothing is impossible with God. God wanted to make a way for us to be able to spend eternity with Him and that began with the birth of Jesus. God takes what looks like an impossible situation of having Jesus be born of a virgin and He makes it possible. No other God is able to do that. Only God can turn the impossible, possible. God did not only make a way for us to know Him but God is able to save us from our sin. You see our sin has separated us from God. No matter how much God wants to be with us and no matter how much we want to be with God that sin has separated us from Him. Man can try as hard as they want to get to God, to try to reach Him by doing good things but he is unable to bridge the gap.

There is a story in Luke about man trying to reach God on his own. **Luke 18:18-27** says, "And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."

This is a story about a rich, young ruler. This young man came to Jesus and wanted to know how he can be saved. How he can inherit eternal life. Jesus told him well you know the commandments and the young man replied, "Well, I have kept all the commandments my whole life." Jesus told the young man that there was one thing that he needed to do if he wanted to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him that he needed

to sell his possessions and give it all away and then he would have his treasure in heaven. The young man was saddened by this news because you see he was really rich and he didn't want to give up his wealth so he turned and he walked away from Jesus. Jesus told the people that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

The crowd wanted to know then who could be saved. Jesus responded that what is impossible with man is possible with God. No matter how good we are, it is impossible for us alone to get to God but it is possible for man to be saved because of God's love for us. Salvation is the work of the Lord who does what otherwise would be impossible. Because of God's power and grace, repenting and following Jesus is possible. There are many stories of salvation that I could tell you. I could tell you about the story of my grandfather's salvation and how we prayed for years for him to become a Christian. I could tell you of stories of people here in the church who have come to know Jesus. But I want to tell you a story of three young men who came to know Jesus.

The whole idea of these three young men coming to know Jesus seemed impossible at first. These were three teenage boys that we met here in Japan 10 years ago. We had a youth service that we were doing on Sunday nights and we invited these three boys to come. Actually they were making faces at Sachiko on a bus and we decided to give her flyers and she marched up to them and gave them the invitation. We had no idea if they would come or if they would throw the invitation away. You see these three boys weren't your typical Japanese boys. They were high school drop outs who were living a rough life. The next Sunday after we had handed out the invitation, there they were. Week after week they came and listened to the Bible story and week after week they heard about God's love for them. We had no idea if the messages were having any impact on them. Eventually they started to bring friends and siblings to the service and those friends started hearing about God's love for them. We had no idea the impact we were having on their life. Some time later we found out that they had accepted Jesus as their Savior and turned their lives around.

What had looked like an impossible situation became possible with God. You never know what kind of impact you are having on people. The seed that you are planting with your neighbor, with your mother, or with your father, can grow with God's help. I want to encourage you to continue to share God's love with the people in your life. You may not realize it but you are making a difference in their life.

I want to close by asking if you know the God we have been talking about today, if you do, are you clinging to the promise He has given us? Are you holding on to the fact that He wants to keep you secure and that he wants to do the impossible in your life? If you are here today and you do not know the God we are talking about, you can know Him today. There will be people in the back of the hall who would love to talk to you about knowing Him. They would love to show you how you can know the God we talked about today. Let's pray.