



A while back, I mentioned a study that comes out every other year called “The State of Theology.” Ligonier Ministries, along with LifeWay Research, polls Christians, as well as people who would have other religious beliefs, to get a view of what people believe about God, the Bible, and morality. A little over a week ago, the 2022 survey results came out. A majority of professing evangelicals who said that Jesus is the only way also stated that God accepts the worship of people in Judaism or Islam. Then, 43% of professing evangelicals stated that Jesus was a great teacher, but was not God. Almost 50% said they believe that God learns and adapts to different circumstances.

As I read these findings, I’m once again reminded that many people who fill churches don’t believe foundational truths that have been held by Christians for centuries. But, in America, you can walk into a church, feel good about yourself, and walk out. But my question is, “What do you actually believe about God? What God do you actually serve?” If you don’t believe Jesus is God, you’re not believing Jesus. If you believe God learns and adapts, that’s not the God of the Bible.

Now, I don’t bring this up because I want to talk about a survey for today’s sermon. I bring this up because this emphasizes one of the reasons why we have this current sermon series on God’s mercy through judgment. In our modern-day churches, people are shirking away from talking about a God who judges. And, even in me saying this right now, you might feel tension inside of you. You’re thinking, “Whoa, Pastor Timothy. Be careful. You don’t want people to get the wrong feeling about God. He’s not just an angry God.” And, I emphatically agree. I’m opposed to people of previous generations who only (or supremely) preached a hell, fire, and brimstone God. But I think we may have pendulum swung to a new extreme in our culture. We may just have a very soft God who hugs everyone and accepts everyone just the way they are without any confrontation or statements about sin or condemnation. Even using the word “condemned” makes many think God is mean.

I personally believe that if we have this kind of thinking, it reveals we’re more affected by current culture than we are by God’s Word. That’s one major reason for this series. But let me add to this. If you have a wrong view of God, you miss everything. As I’ve read in the past weeks, I want to read from Exodus 34:5-8 again: ⁵ **The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.** ⁶ **The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,** ⁷ **keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”** ⁸ **And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped.**¹

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ex 34:5–8.

We're told that God reveals his "name" (meaning, his glory) to Moses. Once God does this, what's Moses' response? Is it, "Yikes! That's horrible"? Is it, "God, you need a PR agent for the world because people aren't going to like this 'visiting the iniquity on the fathers' business"? No. Moses *quickly* bowed his head and worshiped.

Ventura, I'm concerned. My soul is burdened for people not only in the world around us but for the churches. Many have lost sight of who God is. They've lost sight of his glory. Do you want to know his glory? Do you want a heart that worships him? Then we need God the Spirit to reveal to us God's mercy and judgment.

With this said, let me state where we've been so far. And, by the way, if you want to listen to previous sermons, they're all online and available via podcast, too. But let me briefly give an overview of what we've gone through so far. In the first week we got a basic overview of the entire Bible to see how the Bible introduces us to God, and how the Bible defines us as human beings. In seeing the complete perfection and greatness and goodness of God, we saw that humans were created in God's image. We're in the most privileged state possible, responsible to care for his creation and to love others. But we saw that humans are completely dependent on God for everything. **He is Life. Then we saw humans reject God. And, in rejecting God, they have rejected Life. Therefore, to reject God has eternal consequences.** You cannot reject Life and have life. Instead, you have death.

After the first sin of Adam and Eve, we see God give judgment over all creation, and over humanity. But in that judgment, we also saw mercy: there was going to be someone to come who would crush the serpent and destroy sin and death. Right there, we behold God's glory. He's one merciful and gracious and also judges.

So, then we moved into week 2. We saw how **God reveals his mercy through judgment in the nation of Israel.** But in that sermon, I mostly highlighted Jacob's life and how God showed mercy and judgment to Jacob by engaging Jacob in a wrestling match. Through that, Jacob surrendered and trusted the Lord in greater ways. In more significant ways, he stopped his heel-grabbing for control, and saw that God was better than anything else. As we review the entire New Testament, this is what we see is God's intention for Israel (and for the world): that humanity would rest in God and trust in him supremely.

But the question is, "Will we wrestle with him and see him win or will we turn to our own ways like Israel did so many times?" Again, if we reject God, who is Life, the consequences of judgment are condemnation. Why? Because you either have Life, who is God, and you have it abundantly. Or, you reject the eternal Life and have eternal death.

Right now, some of you may be feeling uncomfortable. You might be wanting me to focus more on the Life and less on the death. And, I get that. But, let me give you an illustration to realize how important it is that we talk about the death and punishment. Years ago, I remember a time where Tracy and I were driving from South Carolina (where we lived at the time) to Illinois to visit with family. Around lunch time, we were about 10 minutes away from Indianapolis, so we decided to stop before we hit the city. We got our food and then got right back on the highway. Then, 10 minutes rolled by. Then 30. Then, Tracy or I said, "Oh, look: an outlet mall. That's funny. It looks the same. It's just on the other side of the road." At that moment, it hit us. How far away did that sign say Indianapolis was? Why would the exact same outlet mall be on the other side? We went the other direction! Thankfully we only went about 45 minutes back, but obviously that was a lot of time out of our trip.

I give this illustration, though, to say this: You won't turn around if you don't think you're lost. If we only proclaim a message that says "God is love," which is true (by the way), and we miss the reality that humanity has turned from God and is lost, then we're on the highway, headed to eternal judgment.

But even as I say this, you might think, "How can this be who God is?" Some even think, "I could never worship a God like this." Maybe you're thinking that. If that's you, I want to direct our hearts to the book of Psalms today. The psalms are often turned to by people in the midst of various trials and difficulties. We love the psalms because they're so applicable to life. They're encouraging. They're relatable to our struggles. And they lead us to rejoice in God who is in control and will make all things right in the end. The psalms also don't mince words. God does this because he is the *only* God. He is King, and to sin against him is treason. So, I believe **the psalms reveal God as the King who will bring mercy through judgment to the whole world.** The psalms reveal God's glory, and I hope and pray that we would be compelled to worship God after hearing this message.

With this in mind, let's jump right in.

The psalms reveal God as the King. I want to emphasize this point because God isn't just a good option among other gods. God also isn't one who exists to serve us. God isn't uncaring about his creation. These are various views people hold about God. But the Bible says that God himself is *King* over creation. This is his creation. He made it. He rules it. Let me read a few verses on this. Psalm 22:28 says, **"For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations."**² Psalm 66:7 adds, **"[God] rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations. . ."**³ Then, one more verse from Psalm 103:19: **The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.**⁴

Who is King? God. And to act against the King would then be what? Treason. This is the persistent message from God, beginning with Adam and Eve's sinful act. They rebelled against God. To rebel against God then is to work against all that is good, right, and just. Therefore, God must act in justice. And this leads us to the second part of the main idea:

. . .who will bring mercy through judgment. . . This past week, Caique was telling me about a psalm he was reading for his devotional time, and was stating how encouraging it was, but also kind of how shocking and funny it was. Listen to the verses with me: How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!⁵

Does that not sound kind of odd to our ears? "Oh God, you are so good to me! Thank you for your mercy to me! Now, show judgment to the wicked!" Wait, what? King David, as the anointed one of God, who represents God's character as King to the nation of Israel, recognizes God's mercy through judgment. You hear the tension of it in these verses, right? God is gracious and God judges. He's both! But if you remember the sermon I preached two weeks ago, God's design through judgment is to extend mercy. Hear that. If you're here today and you've experienced judgment or maybe you feel the weight of your sin today, God isn't allowing you to experience this so that you would reject him and experience death. God is calling you to turn to him and find rest for your soul. This reminds me of the apostle Paul's words

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 22:28.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 66:7.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 103:19.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 139:17–19.

in Romans 9. While Paul is talking about something else, he reveals the consistent character of God: **What if God. . .has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy. . .?**⁶ Do you see this? God shows justice in order to serve mercy to people! But in this fallen world with sin and injustice, you cannot simply have “grace.” You must have judgment and mercy.

This truth of judgment and mercy is so clearly seen in Psalm 2, and I’m going to ask you to turn in your Bibles there. If you don’t have a Bible, I’ll try to read in a way that it’ll make sense (or, feel free to ask to look off of someone else).

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”⁷

What do we see here? At the end of Psalm 2, we read, “Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” This is an important phrase because it connects with the beginning of Psalm 1 that says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. . .” You read Psalm 1 and discover a man who essentially is perfect and will stand under God’s judgment. We ought to be thinking, “Who is that man because it sure isn’t me!” And Psalm 2 affirms it. All the nations work against God. Every single one. If you really evaluate your own heart, it doesn’t take long to see how you want to do things your own way and you want to trust yourself and follow your own methods. You can be angered with God and you might feel like you want to be free of him.

The psalmist calls people to a different way. Instead of viewing God as someone who puts chains on you and keeps you from doing all the cool stuff. The psalmist calls us to submit to the Lord. Take refuge in the Son. Why take refuge? You take refuge when something’s out to kill you. Guess what? God’s not the one who is trying to kill you. It’s your own sinfulness. Left to yourself, you’re not the Blessed Man in Psalm 1. But David holds out hope. The Son is the Blessed Man, because if you turn to him, you will be blessed. You will be restored!

But you may think, “Can that be true? Can even I be restored and forgiven when I’ve been sinful against God? Will God love me and have patience with me?” Yes, absolutely!

⁶ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 9:22–23.

⁷ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 2:1–12.

. . .to the whole world. Do you realize how many times the psalms don't just talk about God's mercy to Israel, but for the whole world? Psalm 72:19 says, **"Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!"**⁸ Then Psalm 103:22: **Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion.**⁹ Are human beings part of God's work? Yes! Do we live under his rule? Yes! God designs for all of his creation, and especially people, to know his glory and worth and to live in praise of him. And that takes us right back to Psalm 2. Humans will either continue to embrace their way, and reject God – or they'll take refuge in the Son.

But how do we know that if we surrender, submit to God, and go to him for forgiveness and reconciliation that he actually will forgive us and love us? Let me read from Psalm 22:14-18. These verses are prophetic words that point directly to Jesus, the Son of God, who is King. Listen carefully. Hear these as if Jesus himself is speaking them: **I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.**¹⁰ When did this happen to Jesus? When, on the cross, being mocked but accurately described as the King of the Jews, he was crucified. And we're told in the Scriptures that Jesus endured this to show God's immense mercy. You see, it wasn't only the anger of mankind that Jesus endured on the cross. On the cross, Jesus took the justice that humanity deserved on himself, in our place. And there, on the cross, we have the most beautiful picture of mercy and justice coming together. I'm reminded of the psalmist's words in 85:10, which say that God caused **"righteousness and peace kiss each other."**¹¹ The word "righteousness" can be understood as justice. These words come in a context where Israel is crying out for God to revive them. What do they need? They need God to bring justice and peace together. Isn't that our need as well? Yes! And where does righteousness and peace come together? Jesus, who is the Prince of peace and has satisfied God's justice. **The psalms reveal God as the King who will bring mercy through judgment to the whole world. Jesus is the Son who is perfect. He is the Son who is the Lord and King who comes to restore people from every nation and tribe!** And, why does he do this? To reveal God's glory to us and to bring us back to Life in God himself. **Do you believe him? Do you trust him? Have you experienced the freedom that only he can give? If so, let's rejoice in him now as we celebrate communion. If not, would you turn to Jesus, the Son, now? Trust him. Find rest and life for your soul.** [move into communion.]

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 72:19.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 103:22.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 22:14–18.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 85:10.