

Introduction

This past week, I was on the website of a puzzled person named Ronald Lewis. You'll understand why he was puzzled when I read what he wrote: **"Apparently researchers at Berkeley and Princeton Universities have figured out a way to be in two places at once. As you'll see from the image, I received a visit recently from one user logged at two separate locations (with two separate IPS, even): Berkeley, California and Princeton, New Jersey. How do we even begin to explain this oddity? I'm still scratching my head, because there isn't a logical explanation for this . . . considering the data presented above."**

Lewis is puzzled because of a fundamental truth of our existence. A person can't be in two places at once. We often wish we could, when we have too many things to do, but we can't. We are always, at every moment of our lives, in one place at once.

But while that's a fundamental truth of our existence, it isn't of God's. In fact, He is right now, as I speak, in two places at once, or more precisely, in every place at once and that's what I'm going to preach about today, the omnipresence of God and our response to it.

The Passages

Both the Old and New Testaments teach the omnipresence of God. Let's examine those three Old Testament passages I read.

The first is 1 Kings 8:27. This verse is part of Solomon's prayer of dedication for the newly built temple. God would manifest His presence in a special way in that temple. But Solomon was quick to acknowledge that He wasn't only there, **"Heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built."** Try to pour all of the water from Lake Milton into a glass and you'll grasp what He's saying. Just as the water from Lake Milton fills and overflows the glass, so God's presence fills and overflows the entire universe.

The second passage is Psalm 139:7-8. There's a country song titled *If You Leave Me, Can I Go with You?* According to verse 7, if that title were about God and us, it'd be *If You Leave Me, I'll Be Where You Go.* We can't get away from Him because He always is wherever we go. Verse 8 drives that point home by mentioning the two places that are furthest apart, further apart even than the opposite ends of our universe – Sheol and heaven. God is in both of those places at once.

The third passage is Jeremiah 23:23-24. In verse 23, Jeremiah says that God is always right where you and I are, wherever that may be. The first line in verse 24 tells us the implication of that. We can't hide ourselves from Him. The last line in verse 24 makes the same point Solomon did. He's not only where we are but everywhere in the universe as well. When I hear my grandsons coming to my office at church, I'll often hide from them under my desk. These two verses teach that when I do that, God is right there, under the desk with me, and, at the same time, on Mars and every other planet in the universe.

The Omnipresence of God

Those are the passages. Now, let's examine what they teach us.

In a previous sermon, I gave you a list of 18 qualities of God. Some of those have to do with His competence and some His character. The three passages I read reveal one of those qualities that have to do with His competence. That quality is that He's omnipresent.

That's a good word to describe this quality of His. Let's break it down into its component parts and you'll see what I mean. The word "present" means "here." The prefix, "omni," refers to universality. In this case, it connotes "everywhere." Putting the word and prefix together defines well what omnipresent means. God is everywhere "here." 225 miles from here, Pastor Steve Savage can correctly say to the people of Van Wert Friends Church, "God is here." At the same time, I can correctly say to you, "God is here." God is everywhere "here." He is always everywhere present with His entire being at the same time.

That “everywhere” includes all places. It’s estimated that there are 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 planets in the universe. There are so many “places” on all of those planets together that we couldn’t conceive let alone count them. Nevertheless, God is, right now as I speak, in all of those places at once. That means, of course, that He isn’t localized. He isn’t confined to one place at once like we are. On the contrary, He is always in all of the places in the universe at once.

But “everywhere” includes more than just all places. It also includes all space. Stop and think about how much space there is in the universe. 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 planets are a lot of planets to be sure – but not in the context of our universe. According to some astronomers, the universe is about 27 billion light years across. One light year equals 5,880,000,000,000 miles. Multiply that number by 27 billion and that’s how many miles across the universe is. It’s a mind-numbing number. It means that most of the universe is space. But here’s what I want you to see. None of it is empty. It’s all, and I mean “all,” filled – with the presence of God. He inhabits literally every square inch of the space in the universe. There’s no such thing as empty space.

So that’s what it means that God is omnipresent. He is everywhere “here.” He is always everywhere present with His entire being at the same time. “Everywhere” includes all of the places in the universe. He is in all of those places at once. “Everywhere” also includes all of the space in the universe. He inhabits every square inch of it.

Think Straight

Now, that is one of the Bible’s most staggering revelations about God. It’s remarkable and we need to do two things in response to it.

First, we need to think straight.

Unfortunately, many Christians don’t. They think crooked instead. I know that because of the things they say. Just the other day, for instance, I saw one of those black billboards that are from God. You know the ones that I’m talking about. They have a statement on it that

is signed "God." This one said, "**Don't make me come down there – God.**" That implies that He isn't down here already but up there. Then there's something I've heard many Christians say and said myself. It's that "**My prayers don't seem to be getting beyond the four walls.**" That implies that they have to get beyond the four walls for Him to hear because that's where He is – beyond the four walls. Along those same lines, how many times do Christians say, "**I'm alone**" or "**by myself**"? They imply when they do that no one, including God, is with them.

Those statements show that many Christians, in reality, think crooked. They suppose that God is in what Paul calls the heavenly places and that those heavenly places are far from us. He's way out there someplace, in other words, and there is a vast amount of space between Him and us and that space is empty. That means that He's far removed from our everyday lives and us. Certainly, He does come to help us here and there when we need it. But then when He's done helping us, He returns to where He was – way out there someplace.

That's a devastating way to think though. It makes closeness and intimacy with God psychologically impossible. So, don't think that way about Him. Think straight instead, as if He's omnipresent, because He is. We think straight by doing three things.

First, learn the details about God's omnipresence. I've shared some of those today but there are more. Study passages in the Bible like the three I read and Acts 17:24-28. And study books like *The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer. And study articles you can get on the Internet by indexing the words "God's omnipresence." I've written a synopsis that can be a good first step to all of that. Copies of it are on the table in the narthex by the hall. However we do it, we need to do it. Learn as many of the details about God's omnipresence as we can.

We think straight by doing a second thing. Personalize the details that we've learned. That means identify what their specific implications are to our lives and us are. Doing that requires reflection and thought but it's worth it, believe me. Take the fact that God inhabits every

square inch of space. I've personalized that. He inhabits every square inch of space *around me*. He envelops *me* just as thoroughly as the air around me does. Consequently, it's from the space immediately around me, not from above, that He watches me and acts for me. It's from "here" that He does so not from "out there."

There's a third thing we do to think straight. We purposely and persistently place our minds on the details of God's omnipresence and their implications to us. We think constantly about them during the day.

Doing those three things considerably impacts us. It trains our minds so that we eventually have a constant and strong sense of God's presence with us. That's what it's done for me at least. The first thing I do when I get up, for instance, is say, "**Good morning God.**" I now have such a strong sense of His presence that not acknowledging Him like that would seem rude, like not acknowledging my wife.

Act Right

There's a second thing we need to do in response to God's omnipresence. Act right.

You heard the poem that Marty read today. It's titled *If Jesus Came to Your House* and pictures Jesus appearing in bodily form and doing just that – coming to your house or mine. It asks two pointed questions in that regard. Would our behavior, the way we live our lives, change while He was with this? And would we be glad or sad when He finally left?

That little poem is certainly food for thought isn't it? Suppose that Jesus appears in bodily form and tells you or me that He's going to be with us 24 hours a day for the next week. I have a question for you, one that I've already asked myself. Would you talk and act differently than you normally do when He was with you? And if so, would you go back to talking and acting the way you normally do when He left.

If the answer to those questions is "yes," then one of three things is true. We don't understand the omnipresence of God. Or we understand it but don't believe it. Or we understand and believe it but don't care.

The objective fact is that the Jesus, and the other two persons of the Trinity, the Father and Holy Spirit, are with us 24 hours a day, every day of our lives. Whether we like it or not, they never leave us. If there is something that we wouldn't say or do in their presence, then we had better not say or do it because we are – in their presence that is. Understanding, believing, and caring about God's omnipresence is a spur to holiness. It compels us to act right.

Take the movies we watch for instance. A couple of years ago, I threw out one of my favorite VCR tapes. It was an action movie and I didn't have any qualms about watching it when I bought it years ago. But my wife, who disliked it, asked me a question about it one day. I had told her about the poem Marty read and after I did, she applied it to me. She asked, **"Would you watch that movie if Jesus were in the house, on the couch next to you?"** Her question irritated me at first but I eventually realized it was a valid one. So, I gave thought to asking and answering it. Would I watch that movie if Jesus were in the house, on the couch next to me? No, I wouldn't. But He's omnipresent and thus in the house. So, I threw it away.

You get the idea. Act right. Only live the way we would – only say and do the things we would – if God were with us, because He is.

Conclusion

I leave you with this thought. You and I can't be in two places at once. We can't be here and there at the same time. But God can be and is. He is in fact here, there, and everywhere. Hildebert of Lavardin though explained it far more exactly than that. He wrote what is the most precise description of God's omnipresence I've ever read. It goes like this: **"God is over all things, under all things; outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above, presiding; wholly beneath sustaining, wholly within, filling."** That's the truth about God and we need to live like it. Think straight and act right.