

2CH Sunday at 7.30

Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

God is weird!

Presented by Graeme Best

An atheist – that is a person who believes there is no God – was sitting under a tree one day smugly thinking: “God, I know you don’t exist but if you do exist you must be really stupid.

“Look at this huge oak tree. It’s got tiny acorns on it. And look at that large pumpkin carried by such a small pumpkin plant. Now, if I had been you, I’d have created the huge oak tree to carry the big pumpkins and the pumpkin plant to carry the little acorns. That would make a lot more sense.”

However, while he was reflecting on his own wisdom, suddenly an acorn fell and hit him on his head. “Thank God that wasn’t a pumpkin!” he exclaimed. And it dawned on him, that if there was a God, perhaps he knew what he was doing after all.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. This morning I’d like to share some thoughts around the fact that God is very different to us.

God is weird! He is strange! It certainly appears that way. Now that might seem a rude .. almost blasphemous thing to say, but have you ever stopped and thought about the way God does things here on earth? I tell you, so much of what he does is strange .. is unusual .. is illogical. At least to us humans.

I mean, just consider some of the things he has done. Consider creation. Here is God, the supreme being, intelligent beyond measure .. creating this beautiful world where everything was in harmony .. in perfect balance .. and what did he do? Create a man and a woman, who were designed as the ultimate of his creation, designed to delight God’s heart by being in relationship with him – but he gave them a free will.

God gave them, like he gives us, the ability to choose. Adam and Eve could choose to obey him or not to obey him and in doing so, make a mess of God’s creation. And as we know, they didn’t obey and creation has been messed up ever since. And we live with the results of that fall into sin.

What kind of God would do such a thing? I mean, if it were up to us, if we had taken so much time and effort creating something so amazingly perfect and special, would we have put something into the mix that was going to mess it all up? I don’t think so!

Consider the story of Abraham and Sarah in the Bible. God had told them that through their offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed and that their descendants would be so many that it would be like trying to count the stars in the universe.

But wait a minute. Sarah was past way child-bearing age. The time for having children had passed her by. So much so, Abraham and Sarah couldn’t wait .. They didn’t think it was ever going to happen .. and so Sarah gave her husband her maidservant with whom to have a child. Another mistake.

Because as we know, Sarah did have children. Again, if it were up to us, we would have chosen a much younger woman. For a start, the risks involved in having a child at such an age are so much greater. God certainly is strange.

Think about the story of Gideon. What a classic. Gideon had 32,000 men to fight with him. But God said “No, it’s too many.” Too many? How can you have too many soldiers to fight against an enormous army?

That is how you can win. You can overwhelm your enemy by sheer numbers. Or at least match them and put up a good fight.

But God said “No” and he cut Gideon’s army to just 300 men – 300! To fight all of the Midianites and Amalekites. And there were tens of thousands of them. Now, as we know, the 300 men won the battle .. but would we have ever dreamed of approaching the battle that way? Never! Not for a single moment! I tell you, God appears to be very weird at times, certainly compared to us.

If you look right throughout the Bible, and indeed, throughout history, you will find countless examples of God acting in ways that seem so strange to us as humans. His wisdom is reverse wisdom to that of the world. That is why Isaiah wrote .. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.

The apostle Paul similarly picks up on this when he wrote to the Corinthians. He wrote, “God uses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chooses the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are.” In other words, he does the complete opposite of what we would do.

We certainly see the unusual nature and actions of God in the person of His Son Jesus who came to be the Saviour of the world. In Matthew 11 verses 2 and 3 it says, “When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?””

Why did John ask such a question? Well it was because Jesus was nowhere near the type of Messiah the people, the Jews, expected. John was not sure whether Jesus was the Messiah because of what he had been taught as he had grown up. The Jews thought the Messiah would be a warrior, riding forth in majesty and in victory .. a great conquering hero. One that would overthrow the Romans and establish a new world order with the Jews as the ruling class, if you like.

But what kind of person did God send? He sent an itinerant preacher. True, he was a miracle worker .. but mostly what he did was to teach and heal and feed people and such .. not throw out the Romans.

Jesus was a peace lover and peace maker. Saying things like turn the other cheek and if someone steals your shirt, give him your coat as well. Jesus was nothing like the Messiah the Jews expected. But we shouldn’t be surprised by that because God is so unlike us. His ways are so different. The Jews were expecting a political hero. Instead God sent a humble servant, born of lowly state .. in a stable .. of a virgin .. someone whose way of saving the world was to die on a cruel cross at the tender age of 33, after just three years of ministry in one tiny corner of the world.

If you think about the coming of Jesus into this world as Saviour .. think about it in human terms, we would always conclude .. what a strange way to save the world.

It makes no sense to us. But God's ways are not our ways. In our way of looking at things, he appears weird. Strange. Unusual. Mysterious. Illogical. He at times, makes no sense at all to us humans. But that is God.

Why is it that God seems so weird to us? Well, one reason is that the fact that so many of us want to put God in a box so to speak. In other words, like the Jews in Jesus day, we don't have the right understanding of God, having our own view of what God should be like.

Some people think God should be like Father Christmas. Or a fairy godmother. Or a genie. There to do what we want in our way. Some think God should just be loving and compassionate. Doing good things for us. Only allowing bad things to happen to really bad people.

We box God up to be the sort of God we want. Often, where we are the centre of the universe and not God. But it doesn't work that way does it? God cannot be put into a box and the trouble is, as soon as we put God in a box, God starts looking weird and we cannot understand what he is doing in this world.

God really isn't weird. He is just very different to us frail human beings. That is why we should read and study the Bible in order to try and understand our supernatural God. I encourage you to do that in order to have the true picture of God, because God reveals himself through his word.

But another reason why God seems so strange to us is that **God actually addresses our real needs and not our perceived needs.** We need to remember that God has the big picture. He knows all. And he knows what is best for us. He created us. He knows what we really need.

Consider the Jews at the time of Jesus. They saw their perceived need as being freedom. They desired freedom from foreign rule. But God knew their greatest problem was not a lack of freedom, but was in fact the sin in which they were trapped. Their religion had become so corrupted to be point where it was next to useless in reconciling them with God.

It's the same with us. Think about it. If our greatest need was just education, as some say it is, God would have just sent us an educator. If our greatest need is better technology and cures for diseases and such, he would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need is to have everyone in the world living in prosperity with plenty of food to eat and money to spend, then God would have sent us an economist.

But you see, just like the Jews, our greatest need is to have our sins forgiven so that we can go to heaven and live with God forever. That is why God sent us a Saviour. One who would take our place in death. Dying for our sins.

At the time, it didn't make sense to most of the Jews. It still doesn't make sense to most people. Most people don't understand the fact that they cannot save themselves by being good or whatever. That they need a Saviour. But God does.

That is why he sent Jesus to be our Saviour whom we are called to believe in and follow the rest of our lives. The greatest need of all men and women this side of heaven will always be forgiveness because our greatest problem will always be sin.

In conclusion this morning, a brief thought to get you thinking about how God may be acting in your world. For example, you may perceive a lack of money as being your biggest problem, but God may see a lack of trust in him as a greater problem and so he may hold the money back so that you may learn to trust him.

You may perceive a certain answer to prayer as being your greatest need .. but God may see that your need is to develop patience and perseverance... strength to cope .. courage to go on.. a deepening of your faith.

We need to realise that God is much more interested in our character than our bank balance or whatever. Realise that God is preparing us to help others .. and preparing us for eternity.

And so, when you are struggling, remember that God's ways are not our ways nor his thoughts our thoughts and thereby take comfort in the fact that God is God. That he is not ignoring you but is at work. That the sovereign, loving God who cares so much for each one of us, is actually working out his purposes, his way. Not our way.

Thanks for listening. Have a great day. And God bless.