

## **God At His Best – John 3:16**

**May 19, 2024**

During the Olympics, the summer version which are beginning in Paris later this summer, or during other sports, in politics, in church life, in national or international events, on an individual or a collective basis, when everything comes together to produce a gold medal, or a hard-fought victory, or the overcoming of great odds we hear the phrase, it was their finest moment. It was their greatest moment in history. It all came together, everything fit to produce the victory, the finest hour of triumph.

Have you ever wondered what God's finest hour is? When is God at his best? When can we point and say, that's God at the top of the ladder?

On this Pentecost Sunday, I recall a sermon I heard sometime ago by E.V. Hill, Pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California that provided me with the basis for comments and reflections on this question, based on the text from John 3:16. Following his example I have entitled this message, God at his best. This is by and large how he puts it together, how he answers this question.

When we consider a possible answer all of us would probably turn to Genesis where it says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What more could God do than create the heavens and the earth? That has to be God at his best. A Russian cosmonaut once declared that there was no heaven because when he traveled in the Sputnik, he looked out and didn't see a heaven. But you see, he only went to the backyard about a foot or two. Our galaxy, what we can see with the naked eye is considered small, very small. Even if you could walk from one side of our galaxy to the other, you would only be half way across after a million years. God created the heavens, world without end; the heavens and the earth. We need not search further. That has to be God at his best.

Even our earth; when we consider its vastness, majesty and its many mysteries; it really is an incredible place. Some of us have travelled and explored its greatness, from east to west across North America, south to Mexico, Paraguay, north to Alaska. Some have gone to Asia and Europe even Australia. (note the astronauts completing in 10 minutes the space between Vancouver to St. John's Newfoundland, an absolute spectacular view, making it difficult to concentrate on what one is supposed to be doing)

Every place has something unique and beautiful. God created the heavens and the earth, including the sun that has never needed repair and the moon that has never needed an electrician. Therefore, we would have to conclude that God was at his best when he created the heavens and the earth. That's God. If you want to see God at his best, walk out and look at God's greatness. God has bedecked the sky with globes of light called stars and there are more stars in the sky than there are grains of sand on the earth. That has to be God at his best.

No. I think not. That was pretty good. But several verses later in Genesis chapter 1 God said, "Let us make man." Male and female created he them. People who can do surgery on a blood vessel which is no more than a millimeter in width. People who have built airplanes, landed people on the moon, built ever more sophisticated forms of communication. People who can invent medicines that will ignore all other parts of the body and specifically work on that part for which it was invented. How can that medicine know that it's supposed to work on an eye instead of a toe? People with the ability to think. People with the ability to remember. People even with the ability to deal with difficulties and bring about solutions. People with a vast array of abilities, music, art, science, agriculture, mathematics, all because God made people.

Joplin, Missouri is eight miles from the home of George Washington Carver. There is a memorial park there, dedicated to this man who created about 300 different things from a peanut to nitroglycerin. Carver said, "I never take but one book into my laboratory." When asked, what book do you take? He said, "The Bible, and I have never invented anything. God has just revealed to me what was already there."

We exist because God created us. So, let's conclude that it was when God created the heavens and the earth and all its people, that that was God at his best. No.

There are those who suggest the many miracles brought about by God in the Old Testament, including delivering the Israelites from bondage. Imagine all these people coming out of Egypt with everything they would need, even after Pharaoh had denied them for so long. Look at the miracles that happened with Moses and Aaron as they confronted Pharaoh. That must have been God at his best. Pharaoh went to his icebox and frogs leapt out. Pharaoh went to his bed and it was covered with lice. Pharaoh went to get a drink of water and it was blood. That must have been God at his best, delivering Israel from bondage.

No. No. I know when it was. It was when he cooked quail in heaven and sent them down with the manna. I was when he got water from a dry rock. Not just a little water, but enough for all, plus all their livestock. That had to be God at his best. No. That's not our God. God is better than that.

To see God's greatness is to take a look at him when he looked at us as people. People failed. Everything about them was affected by sin. God looked at our condition and concluded that there is no one who is righteous. We should all die in our sin and deserve it. Guilty. But this great God showed another aspect of his character called love. God so loved that he gave. "God loves each one as if there is only one of us to love," said Augustine. God loved. God gave an only Son, to show us the Father. But sin didn't like it, rose up in rebellion and nailed this only Son Jesus to a cross. E.V. Hill says, I have a 21- month- old grandson, Edward Victor Hill the Third who lives with me. We call him Third. He is gorgeous. He thrills me to death. He does something cute very week. My grandson comes up with something new that makes me increase his amount in my will. I want to be frank with you. If I had to give up Third for you, to keep you from some great harm, you'd have to go. That's true. You would have to go if I had to give up my

grandson. But God who has a love I cannot comprehend, who has a mercy and grace I cannot touch, loved the world and me so much that he gave his only begotten Son, who knew no sin, so that we might become children of God. Heirs of God. On our way to heaven. Bound for glory. Already have a foretaste of it. When he did that, that had to be God at his best.

No. Because God becoming flesh and blood like we are was not the end. He died on a cross. He could have called 10,000 angels. He only needed one. But he died alone. That had to be God at this best, when he died, was wrapped in a burial cloth and sealed in the grave. That had to be God at his best.

No. Because we've had tracks leading into graveyards before. Moses' tracks led into a graveyard. Solomon's tracks led into a graveyard. My grandparent's tracks, led into a graveyard. But there were no tracks on the other side. We've buried great teachers from other religions. They're still there. Buddha is still there. Mohammed is still there. Confucious is still there. But early Sunday morning we have something strange on our hands. Jesus arose and declared, divine power is in my hands. I have the keys to break death, hell and destruction. And I'm alive forevermore. Jesus' death on the cross, covered all our sins. Jesus rose from the dead as a first fruit breaking forever the power of sin and death, paving the way for our own being able to be where he is, in glory. That's God at his best. No. That's a bit too great for me. It is beyond all understanding. I need something more basic.

I believe, I can see, where we can see, God at his best. After Jesus had risen from the dead he said a strange thing, "Tell my disciples and Peter." John in chapter 21 of his account records the story. We see Jesus talking to Peter and we suspect we know what's going on. It was Peter who denied him, cursed him and told the woman in the courtyard all kinds of lies.

So, if we get close enough to our instincts, we might expect to hear Jesus giving Peter an ear full of condemnation. But instead of condemnation by our Lord, Peter was forgiven. "Do you love me?" asks Jesus. "Yes, I love you Lord," answers Peter. I can't really comprehend God's creation of the heavens and the earth. Its hard to deal with Jesus dying on the cross. I understand it. I believe it, its my hope, but there is something too big about it for me to take in.

But Jesus talked to a backslider like me and asked, "Do you love me?" There should not have been any question about Peter's love for Jesus. Jesus should have said, go on, get out of here Peter, I don't have any use for you.

Yet, I stand before you as guilty as Peter, or worse than Peter. And yet I can dare to say that I know God wants to talk with each one of us. Sometimes God addresses people in groups, like a church, or even a nation. But God also wants to talk with you. With great love. God want to have a private conversation with you. You know what he wants to talk about? He wants to talk about how much he loves you and that he has an assignment for you, in spite of your background.

God is one who forgives sin. He's the one who purges and cleanses us. That has to be God at his best. The one who is talking to Peter, has to be God at his best. He wasn't his best when he created the heavens and the earth; not when he made people; not when he called the Red Sea to separate; not when he sent manna from on high; not the virgin birth; not the miracles of the resurrection from the dead. But continuing to talk to lost humanity, has to be God at his best. No.

Would you like me to tell you when he was at his best. It isn't even in the Bible. God was at his best over 40 years ago with a little country boy who at about the age of 11 with his Gideon bible in his hands, said yes to God. And this great God of the universe came all the way down and got right into my heart, into the center of my being. Then God got into my head. Then God got all over me. I didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't understand it all, but I know it was right and true. That is God at his best, when I took note of God, called out to God and when he, the God of the universe answered my call, came into the heart and spirit of an 11-year-old boy.

God is ready to do it again, over and over again. Everytime he is invited and moves in to save a lost and dying sinner, that's God at his best. Not the moon and stars. Not the hills and mountains. Not the trees and valleys. Not the rivers and lakes and oceans. But God picking up a drunkard and making him a preacher, picking up someone else and making them a singer, picking up people down and out and putting them on their feet, transforming them into his likeness one step at a time, causing them to stand and declare Jesus as both Lord and Savior, that's God at his best.

God is at his best when he is allowed to enter people's lives and begins to transform them, giving people direction, purpose, meaning, a place to stand, giving them hope and an eternal presence to guide them on their way. God puts it altogether.

It took a miracle to put that sun in its place. It took a miracle to put the moon in space. But in the words of that old hymn, when he saved my soul, cleansed and make me whole, that was God at his best. Amen.

Benediction: Thank you Lord for saving my soul. Thank you Lord for making me whole. Thank you Lord for giving to me, thy great salvation so rich and free. Amen.