

## ***SPEAKING GOD, ISAIAH 55:8-11***

What is God really like? #12

◆**Intro:** Have you ever noticed how we talk to babies and animals that can't talk back? Pinch those little cheeks and say things like, "Don't you have chubby little cheeks, yes you do. I know you do. Ah-huh, that's right you do, don't you? Yeah, I know. That's right." The kids' thinking, "She's lost it. Old-timers is setting in on that girl!" We do the same thing with puppies, right? "Oooh aren't you a purdy doggie. I'll bet you like your ears scratched, hum? Do you like that? Do you like having your widdow ewes scwatched? You're such a good doggie, yes you are." What's with the "yes you are"? Nobody's arguing? Know what I think? I think we humans are drawn to relate, even when the creature cannot communicate back to us, so we fill in the spaces for them. It's a human thing. That's why it offends us when a human withholds communication. We say someone gives us the "cold shoulder." That's when they won't talk to us, and it feels cold. So speaking, communicating is something of the overflow of a being that loves, maybe.

◆If you like to watch wildlife shows, like I do, you are probably fascinated with the animal kingdom, the incredible ability, habits, and patterns of creatures. We can film them, marvel at them, say how cool they are. But generally we have to be quite sneaky in doing so, for if they saw us they'd run for the hills! Now if a wild horse, or a whitetail deer, instead pulled up and came trotting right over to you, snorted and motioned with their head for you to follow, kind of like Lassie leading the sheriff to rescue a boy in the well, –well suddenly we're on a whole new level of life, aren't we? I remember an intriguing film from years ago called Day of the Dolphin in which George C Scott was a trainer who learned to speak with dolphins.

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He and his wife were known as Pa and Ma. Relationship with animals had begun and it intrigues us. Maybe that's something like it is with humans and God. As we continue to search the scriptures to find out what God is like, we can't help but consider a very foundational aspect of his character, that is that he speaks. He communicates.

◆**1. That God speaks means that God is the God of revelation.** He reveals himself, his truth, his character to people. In fact, if God didn't speak, or reveal himself, we can be certain that we would have no idea he was even there. Not that we shouldn't be able to pick up on it. The Bible says the skies proclaim the handiwork of God (Ps.19). It's just that in a morally fallen world, there are no eyes that can see him behind his handiwork, which is why your unsaved friends don't see it.

◆“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Romans 1:18-21, NIV.

◆That's all of us, without the intervention of God. So, that God speaks also shows us he's an intervening God!!

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◆A. In a fallen world, God is like a zoo keeper that has become invisible to the zoo animals who in their boredom and lifelessness, no longer notice him at all. But the thing about the true God is that he is not satisfied with not being known. That's what his speaking character shows us. Jeremiah 31 promises that in the final Day, we won't be teaching about God anymore because absolutely everyone is going to know him. It is the end goal of history.

◆*“No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”* Jeremiah 31:34, NIV.

◆That's the end goal of your life; for you to know and relate to your God. The prophet Hosea reminds us that all the ceremony at church was not about doing religious things, but a process of knowing about God.

◆*“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”* Hosea 6:6, NIV.

◆When he created the first man and woman, unlike all the other creatures, he came to walk and talk with them in the world he had made. What do you suppose God talked with Adam and Eve about? Did he preach sermons, or give lectures on horticulture? [“Now look Adam, the grape vines need to be trimmed up off the dirt. They produce better that way. And don't let the baby lions play with the baby giraffes. They mean well but they're just too rambunctious and their claws are sharp. And if you see the bushes in sector 12 getting higher than 7', well then you need to...”] That's not relating, is it? No. Sometimes parents think

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so. Did you know that continual lectures sink relationships. Conversation buoys them. There's a difference. Lots of folks may acknowledge that God speaks, but they think it's only in commands, instructions, and sermons.

◆ While some animals, and even some humans, are merely progenitors of offspring, and while some animals eat their own young, and some humans, unlike most animals, will even discard their young – God is different. God wants to know his young, and be known.

◆ Ever since the first family, God has been talking to people. Calling to people. He counseled Cain after he killed his brother Abel. He instructed Noah to build the ark. He called Abraham and his family to follow him to a new land. He told Moses what to tell the Hebrew people. He sent prophets to kings and to servants alike. He gave David songs to write. He even sent his own Son.

◆ *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”*

*Hebrews 1:1, 2, NIV.*

◆ AW Tozer writes in *The Pursuit of God*, “It is the nature of God to speak, to communicate his thoughts, his self to others. The application of the term “Word” to his eternal son leads us to believe that self-expression is inherent in the Godhead. He is by nature continuously articulate.”

◆ One thing becomes abundantly clear: God does not wish to be some anonymous benefactor in the sky. Neither is he standing at the edge of

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your driveway while you go to and fro from work. He desires to know and be known. He intends to infiltrate his own creation with his own holy influence.

◆“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD’s renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed.” Isaiah 55:10-13, NIV.

◆You see, when God speaks, things happen. Change happens.

◆**B. What does it mean to know God? It means to have him rub off on you.**

Knowing God is more than being aware of his existence. Even a lot of people that claim to be God’s followers live in a state of unconscious Christianity. They have very little idea of the things God has said in the past, even though they may own a record of it. They are caught off guard by trials in life, and are unprepared for spiritual attacks. They assume to actually know God means to understand three syllable theological terms like omnipotence and immutability. Well we’ve been looking at those attributes in this series but learning data about God is not our point. To know God is more than having correct information about him. Demons have that and it shakes them in their boots.

◆“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.” James 2:19, NIV.

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◆ Now you can rightly guess that demons do not want to live with or walk through existence with God. They know the information, but they don't *know* God. People can be the same way.

◆ *"The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." 1 John 2:4-6, NIV.*

◆ C. Why don't we know God better? There is a great chasm of difference between God and man. The Bible is as clear as Caribbean water on this.

◆ v8-9 in our text remind us that God's ways are higher than ours, God's thoughts are higher than ours. Isaiah tells us two chapters earlier that we are all like sheep that stray off in our own directions. (53:6) We've already seen in Romans 1 that in our sin we suppress knowledge of God. Even though it's all around us. Paul tells us in Romans 3 that in our sin we fall short of arriving at God.

◆ It can get frustrating trying to do right and failing often. In our shame we may give in to a quiet prayerlessness. (God doesn't really want to hear from me.) The consequence is that a crisis arises and we decide that there really isn't a God out there anyway. Or if there is he certainly doesn't care about us. Desires arise within us to really loosen all the screws and we brush off pangs of conscience as old fashioned, not suspecting that they may very well be the proddings of God's Holy Spirit at that moment. Some folks believe that God's sole interest in them is catching them at doing

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wrong, or having fun, which they associate. So this narrow view of God as Judge only, keeps them from hearing him speak in many other tones.

◆ Or perhaps we've know people who swung far to the right on the whole "God spoke to me" thing. They are overly emotional. They shout when they pray, break into tears at the drop of a hat and support all their criticism of you with phrases like "God impressed on me that..." You want to hide from them when you see them coming. And what happens? We begin to suspect God doesn't really speak much at all, and that it's mostly people making things up.

◆ So you see, there is plenty that gets in the way of us knowing God much.

◆ **2. That God speaks/reveals means that God wants relationship, and interaction with me. That he is a being that loves.** Relationship is how people rub off on you.

◆ I have a pastor friend named Doug who ministers in Grand Rapids, MI. He shared with me a story told to him by his friend Ted. Ted was speaking at a conference on obeying the voice of God. A lady came up and shared that she had recently felt God prompting her to stop at the 7-11 store, go to the slushy machine and stand on her head. She resisted thinking it quite ridiculous. But she kept feeling this nagging voice, or thought. So she did it, just in case it was God, all the while feeling rather silly. After standing on her head by the slushy machine, she stood up, brushed herself off and headed toward the the door. The cashier stopped her and asked why she did that. Her reply: "I think God told me to." That's when the cashier pulled a pistol out from under the counter and laid it on the counter. He explained

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that he was ready to kill himself, had even had the barrel in his mouth earlier, and had said, “God, if you are real, have someone come in here and stand on their head by the slushy machine.” I used to read those kind of stories and wonder if any of them were actually true. But at this point in my life of seeking God I can share with you several similar experiences of my own. God does still speak. And the more we listen for him, the more we hear him, like duck hunter who knows how to call a mallard or a goose because he has listened to their sound. After all, communicating with us is why God made us and why he saved us. Not to put us on some shelf in heaven someday. We are not to be stuffed trophies on the walls of heaven. We are to be friends with our Maker. God saved us for more than right thinking and good behavior –for more, not less. He saved us to restore us to a relationship with him!

◆ Relationship happens in conversation/speaking. Many of us can relate to a young lad at a school dance who is entranced by the beauty of his female classmate, but can’t work up the courage to speak to her. We all know his fate. There can be no relationship if the two shall never speak. How can we speak with God?

◆ A. I can discover relationship with God by regular repentance. That’s in our text. Want to hear more from God? Want to feel forgiven and delighted in (and you are, even when you don’t feel it.)? Keep a clean slate. Keep a short list of unresolved issues with God. One of the reasons we don’t hear God’s thoughts is that our ears are stuffed with other thoughts, dirty ones. And there’s only so much space, right?

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◆“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.”  
Isaiah 55:6-8, NIV.

◆Forsake your “way,” if you want to discover God’s “way”. Put away “thoughts” of an evil man, if you want to hear “thoughts” of God. This is why it matters what we read, what we sing along to, what we watch, right? Our habits matter in our experience of God.

◆B. I can discover relationship with God by getting into God’s word. Martin Luther said “The Bible is like a lion. You don’t have to defend it, just let it loose. It will take care of itself.” The Psalmist asks “How can a young man



keep his “way” pure? He answers, “by living according to [God’s] word.” Ps.119:9. There is power in being in the Word. See this picture? (**show Torah**). This scroll is a Jewish Torah. It was in town this week on tour at Purdue. It was handwritten around 1750. On what’s been called

Kristallnacht (Night of Glass), Nov.9, 1938, in Nazi Germany, the German

SS and citizens began looting Jewish synagogues and

businesses, smashing windows and burning property,

especially scrolls. In the Jewish faith, nobody touches the

scroll but the priest. But during the looting, the priests

handed scrolls out the windows to anyone who would take

one and perhaps preserve it. This one was hidden in the Black Forest and



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survived the war. We could take an example from our Jewish brothers.

Many of us have these books, the books of God -but almost never read them, much less risk getting shot to save them!

◆C. I can discover relationship with God in conversational prayer. God is always speaking, like radio waves in the air. We just don't tune in. He may speak while you meditate on scripture, while watching a movie, counseling with friends, driving your car, sitting in a coffee shop. If we learn to ask, seek and knock we will hear more often. Don't think that God is limited to this sermon, or that devotional. You can be sure he will not contradict his recorded Word, but he is not limited to it. Ask God questions. Discuss things with God. By all means do more in your prayers than making lists of troubles.

◆*“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.” Jeremiah 33:3, NIV.*

◆**Conclusion:** You see, God is very much like you and me with our pets and babies; he wants to relate to his family, so he speaks. The beautiful thing is that we are not his pets. We are his kids. We can learn to converse with God. He speaks all the time and in many ways. We have the advantage of knowing when it's him by comparing it to the history of his recorded words! All the stories you hear and read in the Bible of God speaking to the boy Samuel, or to Jacob, or to a prophet, or King David - these are not exceptions. They are examples. God wants to speak to you too. It's what he's like. You can learn to hear him! So much does he want this that he sent his Son, his final Word, to speak forgiveness of sin. Respond to him today!