



## God in a box

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 6<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Religion is God in a neat package. We would like to have everything figured out in life, especially the relationships we have with others. Relationships can be challenging mainly because we aren't in control of how others react. In order to make relationships manageable we tend to generalise individuals and peg them into pigeon holes. Personalities, worldview, if they are liberals or conservatives, Christian or non Christian – being able to define someone makes it easier to relate or not relate to them.

We are like that with God too. To have a God who is mysteries or not fully comprehensible is unnerving and puts us in a vulnerable position. So we define Him. We speak of Him as if He can be fully understood because we now have the Bible where God has revealed Himself. It is true, that as Christians we believe that the Bible is the revealed Word of God. We go too far if we hold to the belief that the Bible is the complete revelation of God. If the Bible is the complete revelation of God then God has been described in 783,137 words in the King James Version of the Bible.

IF GOD CAN BE COMPLETELY DEFINED THEN WE ARE NO LONGER TALKING ABOUT GOD. WE ARE ACTUALLY DESCRIBING AN IDOL.

### The Pharisees and Jesus

The pharisees made that tragic mistake. They believed that they had the complete revelation of who God was, who the Christ was and when and how the Christ was to appear. The Christ definitely would not come from Nazareth. He will not a familiar individual like Joseph the carpenter's son, and he definitely will not be a vagabond who hangs out with shady characters. They had figured out who the Messiah was and were confident they would be able to recognise him when he did finally come. When Christ finally appeared before them, they neither recognised him nor received him.

*John 1:11 (NKJV) He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*

The view that everything that needs to be known about God has been revealed in Scriptures gave them no room to entertain any possibility that Jesus of Nazareth could have well been the person He said he was. The inability to allow any revelation beyond their interpretation of the Scriptures made them blind to the truth of who Jesus was.

*John 5:18 (NKJV) Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*

How could they have known. Nowhere in the Old Testament did God ever give a clear description of the coming Messiah. Everything said was veiled in mystery and the unknown. It was left to individual

interpretation. The problem wasn't that they attempted to interpret those difficult messianic passages. Their problem was how they viewed the Scriptures. To them the Scriptures contained everything they needed to know about God. Instead of allowing the Scriptures to become "the light to their path" and the "lamp to their feet", they boxed God into the limited vocabulary of the Old Testament.

To them the Scriptures were the source of life. Jesus corrects that error. The Scriptures aren't life – the Scriptures point to Life.

*John 5:39 (NLT) "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!"*

Eternal life isn't a way of life. Eternal life is a person. The Scriptures were the signpost pointing to Jesus. They made the signpost their destination.

It's like me standing next to a signpost and thinking I've arrived at my destination. I live in a city 500 km from the capital Wellington. I will be a fool to stand next to a sign pointing to Wellington, taking a selfie and posting it on my facebook page letting everyone know that I'm in Wellington. I'm not in Wellington, I'm next to a signpost that's pointing to Wellington. Big difference – 500 km difference actually.

## Religion defined

Here then is religion in a nutshell. Christianity becomes a religion:

- when defending our ideas of God become more important than pursuing a relationship with God
- when practices become prerequisites before we access God – *"he broke the Sabbath"*
- when acts that cause harm to others are justified as acts of love towards God – *"they sought to kill him"*
- when the word of God replaces the God of the word - *"You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!"*

Jesus didn't come to earth to set up a religion. Believers in the early church didn't sign up to be part of a new religious group. They were just following Christ.

## The people called "anointed ones"

Remember when Christians were called "anointed ones"?

*Acts 11:26 (NKJV) ... And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

The word translated in English as Christian is actually the Greek word – *Christianos*. It comes from the word *Christos* which means "anointed one". So the word *Christianos* could either mean "anointed ones" or "belonging to the anointed one". Either way when people saw the followers of Christ they somehow linked them to the anointing.

## Anointing can get messy

These days when we are anointing someone with oil, we are very "civilised" about it. We dab a little oil on the finger and maybe rub the forehead with it. But in the Old Testament the anointing ceremony got a little messy. Initially used for priests, it also later became the practice to anoint kings as well. When someone was anointed, an entire flask of oil was used. It would drip down from the

head right to the garments of the priest. The psalmist describes it when reflecting on the anointing of Aaron.

*Psalms 133:2 (NKJV) It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.*

Being a Christian (anointed one) is messy business. It is messy to be part of an anointed work of God. God the Holy Spirit is in the cleaning business. He is a fixer upper. He is quite accustomed to the messiness that comes with the anointing.

## Stephen and the messy anointing

- Being Christian sure got messy for Stephen. We see the life of Stephen unfolding in Acts chapter 6 and 7.
- He was full of God's grace and power and performed amazing miracles and signs among the people (6:8)
- He spoke with great wisdom and confounded those who opposed the work of God

*Acts 6:10 (NKJV) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.*

- He stood out in a godly way

*Acts 6:15 (NKJV) And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.*

- He challenged established religion

*Acts 7:51 (NLT) "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you!"*

- He lived and died for what he believed in (7:59)

*Acts 7:59-60 (NKJV) And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

## RELIGION COMES PACKED IN A NEAT PACKAGE. ANOINTING WILL CREATE A MESS.

## God outside the box

What does a relationship with God outside the box look like? We get a picture of it when Paul describes Timothy's faith.

*2 Timothy 1:5-7 (NKJV) when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

From this passage, I want to briefly summarise what I think a relationship with God outside the box looks like?

## **A relationship with God outside the box is without hypocrisy**

Paul calls Timothy's faith "genuine faith". The word genuine in Greek is the word *anypokritos*. It means without hypocrisy or pretence. To be genuine and sincere. A genuine relationship with God is without the pretense that comes with trying to conform to a mould or external pattern of living. Living a life without hypocrisy allows me to be me and let God mould me and shape me to be more and more the "Godlike me" he created me to be.

That is why church is a messy place. We all come without hiding behind a mask, pretending to be someone we aren't. Mess and all we come and be ourselves and we should be accepted as we are. We cannot change a thing. It is the Holy Spirit who transforms us. So we come with our mess and in the midst of a messy anointing we are transformed from glory to glory to becoming more Christ like.

## **A relationship with God outside the box is very infectious**

When faith is genuine, when we have a group of people living without pretence and accepting one another as we are, that's infectious.

*2 Timothy 1:5 (NKJV) when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.*

Genuine faith is observable. It is transferable and is potently infectious.

## **A relationship with God outside the box will keep you wanting more of God**

Paul reminded Timothy to "stir up the gifts of God".

*2 Timothy 1:6 (NKJV) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

Our relationship with God is never to be static. It is organic and living. To stir up is to kindle, to inflame. Fire will die eventually if unattended. Our relationship with God requires attention. It requires us to position ourselves to want more. You never restrict yourself to the knowledge of God or experiences of God in the past. You cherish them but you build on them. There is so much more of God that we can experience here on earth. The Bible characters and their stories are meant to wet our appetite with all the possibilities that we can experience and then more.

## **A relationship with God outside the box is not governed by fear**

*2 Timothy 1:7a (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear*

Religion is the source of fear. Religion makes us fearful that we may get things wrong with God. When we are in a genuine relationship with God, when we realise that being an anointed one allows us to be messy, we relinquish the need to do the right thing and embrace the freedom of being with God.

## **A relationship with God outside the box is operating in the threefold anointing**

*2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

A genuine, unrestrained relationship with God allows us to experience the life of the Spirit in these three dimensions:

- The spirit of power – functioning daily in the supernatural and the miraculous. It’s a life empowered with the ability to function in abundant grace through the *dunamis* power of the Holy Spirit.

Imagine what Monday morning will look like when you go out there and operate under the *dunamis* power of God. Imagine that sales pitch. Imagine the dealings you have with your clients. Imagine your interactions with colleagues, friends and loved ones – when you function under the *dunamis* power of the miraculous and the supernatural.

- The spirit of love - That’s agape love. The unconditional, sacrificial giving of self to others. This “God loving others through us” lifestyle which allows them to taste and see that God is good.
- The spirit of a sound mind - sound judgement and self discipline. A mind that is dwelling on the things above. The ability to discern and make decisions with the mind of Christ. The ability to constrain our thoughts feelings and actions and subjecting it to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

That’s what life outside the box looks like. A relationship with God that is without hypocrisy; very infectious; always wanting more of God never satisfied with the status quo; not fearful of new adventures with God; and living daily under the messy anointing of power, love and a sound mind.

REMEMBER THIS:

IF GOD CAN BE COMPLETELY DEFINED THEN WE ARE NO LONGER TALKING ABOUT GOD.

RELIGION COMES PACKED IN A NEAT PACKAGE, ANOINTING WILL CREATE A MESS

DON’T BE SATISFIED WITH A PAPER BAG FULL OF GOD. LIVE A UNRESTRAINED CHRISTIAN LIFE. LIVE WITH GOD OUTSIDE THE BOX.