

A God Who Proclaims (Revelation)

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now to our Bible readings this morning. You'll find that in the Old Testament in 1 Chronicles chapter 17. We're beginning just a little series over this next month or so in this one chapter.

Because it's an extraordinary chapter, it's one of the high points of the history of the Old Testament, the covenant that God makes with David. You find it too in 2 Samuel 7.

But here in the Chronicles, we have this post-exilic preacher, the chronicler. You have his take on these events. And we're going to be spending some weeks in this chapter just because it shows us in so many ways some of the basic characteristics of what kind of God it is that we're speaking about.

What kind of God we worship, the God of the covenant, the God who makes himself known all through Scripture. And in this chapter reveals so much of who he is and what he does.

So we're going to read together 1 Chronicles 17 at verse 1, page 348 if you have one of the blue Bibles. Now when David lived in his house, that is his palace, David said to Nathan the prophet, Behold, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under a tent.

[1 : 2 5] And Nathan said to David, Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you. But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan. Go and tell my servant David, thus says the Lord, It is not you who will build me a house to dwell in.

For I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up Israel to this day, but I've gone from tent to tent and from dwelling to dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, Why have you not built for me a house of cedar?

Now therefore thus shall you say to my servant David, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, following the sheep, to be a prince over my people Israel.

And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall waste them no more, as formerly from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel.

[2 : 4 2] And I will subdue all your enemies, moreover, I declare to you, that the Lord will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house, and in my kingdom forever.

And his throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house that you have brought me thus far?

And this was a small thing in your eyes, O God. For you have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come, and have shown me future generations.

[3 : 58] You'll see the footnote says that's a very difficult phrase to translate. You could read it this way. You have seen me as the destiny of mankind in the future.

What more can David say to you for honoring my servant? For you know your servant. For your servant's sake, O Lord, and according to your own heart, you have done all this greatness in making known to me all these great things.

There is none like you, O Lord, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making for yourself a name for great and awesome things, and driving out nations before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt.

And you made your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. And now, O Lord, let the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house be established forever and do as you have spoken.

And your name will be established and magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Israel is Israel's God, and the house of your servant David will be established before you.

[5 : 26] For you, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him. Therefore, your servant has found courage to pray before you. And now, O Lord, you are God, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.

Now you have been pleased to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you. For it is you, O Lord, have blessed. And it is blessed forever.

Amen. And may God bless us His word. Well, if you would turn to 1 Chronicles chapter 17, that will help you as we look at some of this this morning.

Our God is a God who proclaims. That is, He is a speaking God. He speaks clear words to be understood and to be obeyed.

And that, of course, means that Christianity is not at all about human religion. It's all about divine revelation. We're going to spend the next few weeks looking at this chapter in 1 Chronicles 17.

[6 : 47] It is a great chapter. As I said, a real high point in the story of God's salvation. It's headed in our Bibles at the Lord's covenant with David.

It comes at the end of that story about the ark of the covenant of God that we were looking at just recently in 1 Samuel 4 to 6. Do you remember the ark is lost and goes off to the land of the Philistines?

And this chapter is the Chronicles version of the story that comes right at the end or the conclusion of that story. If you look back to chapter 15, you'll see that it's about the ark being brought back to Jerusalem.

And if you read through that chapter, you'll find that we're told very carefully that the Levites carried the ark in just the way God had commanded them to.

Remember, that was the problem at the end of 1 Samuel 6, wasn't it? They paid no attention to God's commands about how to carry the ark and great disaster fell the people. But in chapter 15 here, they'd learned their lesson and in chapter 15 verse 25 and 26, you'll see that because they were doing it the way God told them to do it, God helped the Levites.

[8 : 04] And so in chapter 16 at the beginning, they brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

And most of the rest of chapter 16 is the great psalms of praise that the people sang on that great day. But we're going to look at chapter 17. I've chosen this for us to focus on for a few weeks rather than going through a large story as we will often do to focus on this because it's a chapter that gives us so much clarity about who our God is and what he's like.

And that's something that we really do need to be very sure about today. Don't you find that if you're in a conversation today with somebody about God that very often you'll find that they're speaking in terms that you hardly recognize.

There's very little common understanding between your understanding of who God is and what the average person in our society is talking about when they're talking about God.

Often they're talking about a completely different thing from what you mean and from what the Bible means. God is a very threadbare term these days.

[9 : 21] People use it to mean almost anything and they assume sometimes very ridiculous things. Sometimes it's even used in a sort of sense so as not to have to believe in God as he really is at all.

I read a quote from Woody Allen who said if only God would give me a clear sign like making a large deposit in my name in a Swiss bank account. Well you see that sounds funny doesn't it?

But you see that encapsulates many many people's understanding and view of God. That God is just like the genie of Aladdin's lamp to dance to our tune to be a sort of lucky charm in life to give us all the things that we want.

And I would venture that most people in our country today if they think about God at all it's in that sort of a way. It's a God actually entirely of their own imagining that they're thinking about and speaking about.

So in that sense skeptics like Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud are absolutely right that God is just a figment of man's imagining. God is just an opium of the people.

[10 : 29] A collective neurosis is a sort of prop to prop up people's feebleness or their desires. I suppose more recently it's Richard Dawkins isn't it? People will say that the whole idea of God is just a delusion.

It's just in man's mind. Well indeed that is precisely what most such notions of God and most human religion really is. A figment of man's mind.

And of course the Bible is just as scornful of that whole kind of thing as Karl Marx or as Sigmund Freud or indeed as Richard Dawkins. You read Isaiah chapter 44 for example and you'll see the scorn the contempt that God has for the person who takes a lump of wood and takes half of it and chops it up and makes a fire and cooks his dinner and then takes the other half and forms it into an idol and bows down and worships it.

How utterly foolish and ridiculous. And today's world is just as full of gods which are utterly impotent creations of the human mind just like that.

Saw recently an advert for the body and soul fair to be held in Glasgow at Concert Hall. The invitation was to come along and interact with the divine.

[11 : 47] Find out about God. And what was it offering? Answers from spirits, past lives, revisited, reincarnation to help you explain, a reincarnation to help you explain your life.

You could discover the magical world of nature spirits. You could tune into angels and recognize visions and feelings as you receive divine guidance from them. You could have past life surrogacy, whatever that is, and be on the cutting edge of karma and even discover bioenergy healing.

And very sadly, I saw something really that looked pretty much the same going on in our old building down Buchanan Street offering all sorts of destiny words, head and neck massage, spiritual cleansing, dream interpretation, spiritual art, all that sort of thing.

What kind of God, what kind of divine is that sort of thing presenting to us? Well, it means we need to be very, very clear, don't we, to know what kind of God we are talking about.

What kind of God is the Bible really talking about? It's a very important question because if the God of the Bible really is just like all of the other gods, then we really just need to close up here, don't we, and go down to the concert hall and start queuing up to pay our 25 pounds to go in and commune with the divine.

[13 : 14] And certainly, I will be down there charging 25 pounds of time to give you anything you want and I'll become a very rich man very quickly, won't I? But of course, the God that the Bible proclaims, that the Christian faith proclaims, is far removed, is absolutely removed from all of those kind of human concoctions and imaginings.

And what we proclaim, therefore, to the city of Glasgow is from the Scriptures. And we proclaim the one true and living God.

So maybe you're here this morning because you wandered in off the street and you're interested in finding out, in seeking the truth about who God really is, the real God. Well, if that's right, this series might be just the right thing for you.

So come along in the coming Sundays and we're going to learn together about this God who is the only God. But then, even if you've been a Christian for a long time, then it's very, very important for us too, isn't it, to know the real God whom we serve.

It's so important when we're living in a world with so many troubles with so many things to fear with all the terrorism that's going around us. It's so important, isn't it, when the truth about our own personal lives is that we will have to live with sadness, with tragedy, with hardship, with stress, with difficulty.

[14 : 36] Who is the God who we are clinging to in this world? What is He really like and how do we know that we can really trust Him? Well, that is what the Bible is all about.

It's not about us. It's all about God to teach us who He is. The Bible isn't a book full of tips for our lives. It's not a book just teaching us about morality.

It's not a book just to give us guidance. Of course it teaches us morality. It guides us how to live. But far, far more importantly, even than that, is it tells us about God.

It is God preaching Himself to us so that we might know Him and know what He's like and know how He works. And we need to know that, don't we, more and more and more.

We need to know the God we worship so we can know Him better, so that we can love Him, so that we can trust Him. Whatever life might throw at us, whatever we might find is waiting.

[15 : 37] One of the biggest problems in the professing church today is simply that people don't know nearly enough about the God that we worship. They just don't know the kind of God that we have and that's why people might have faith but often it's very weak.

That's why people often live with great fears and all sorts of doubts. That's why they don't have the settled assurance that God wants us to have. There's a great verse at the end of Daniel chapter 11.

The people who do know their God will be strong and do exploits. That's the old version. It's the one I remember. But isn't that right?

The people who know God will be strong when days are dark and evil. Well, we are living in dark and evil days. We're living in days that are difficult for the Christian faith.

And friends, the days look likely to become more difficult. So we need to know, don't we, the God that we have? Well, the chronicler, that's the writer of this book, he was a preacher.

[16 : 45] He was ministering to the Israelite people, the people of Judah, who had come back to the land after their exile around the 5th century BC. And these were very dark days for God's people.

The glory days had long gone. Hundreds of years had passed since the great days of David and Solomon the king. And the people had been in exile. But all through those years, as you know, God sent his word through the prophets to promise the people that a return to the land would come, that the temple would be rebuilt.

Indeed, that ultimately the great day of the Lord would be unveiled, ushering in the new heavens, the new earth, the home of righteousness. But for these exiles who had returned to the land, things didn't seem to be that way.

Yes, the temple was rebuilt, but it was a pale shadow of its former glory. Yes, they were in the land, but they still had no great king over them anymore. They were still under the Persian Empire.

And of course, there was manifesting no great cosmic renewal, no heaven on earth, no reign of peace from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. And everything in the world all around about them seemed to be saying, well, just what Nietzsche said so many centuries later, God is dead.

[18 : 06] God is dead. Stop dreaming. Your faith is vain. Your faith is futile. It's just old wives' tales. It's all been debunked by the cynicism of our modern advanced era.

That's the situation that the chronicler, this preacher, was facing. Well, what was his answer? Well, his answer wasn't to try and revamp God and revamp the church to make it fit better in that new post-exilic world.

I wonder if people in those days used to go on about things having changed in this post-exilic culture, just as people go on about that today. Oh, things have changed in our post-modern culture. I'm sure they did. People have always been saying that same thing, haven't they?

Oh, those old things don't work anymore. What we need is something new. Not for the chronicler. What he did was to turn his people back to the historic faith of God's people, the faith that had been once and for all delivered by God himself.

And what he did was to expand that and apply it afresh in his own day for his own generation so that they would know their God, so that they would know the only true God and be able to stand firm whatever the world would throw at them.

[19 : 35] And of course, that is precisely what we need today in the church in our generation. And that's why this chapter is a great one just to drop anchor in for a few weeks to take our time and to see what it tells us about what the God of the Bible really is all about and who he is.

And it's a chapter that's full of richness, full of truth. We're just going to scratch the surface today at the very, very beginning. And I just want to look at just really one thing and it's the thing that the first five verses of chapter 17 are really all about.

That this God, the God who is the true God is a God who proclaims that he is a speaking God and that he speaks clearly to human beings so that they can understand him and so that they can obey him.

Our God, the true God is not hidden. He's not hidden so that we have to go on seeking, seeking endlessly in order to find him. God is a God who comes near to reveal himself to human beings.

So here's King David in verse 1. And after all the drama of the ark being brought back to Jerusalem, here he is. He's sitting in his palace with Nathan the prophet. I don't know, maybe it's after dinner and he's sitting on the porch looking at his beautiful garden and sipping his port and it suddenly hits him.

[20 : 56] What am I doing living in this extraordinary palace when God and the ark of the covenant is just in a mere tent? And so he says that to Nathan.

And of course Nathan knows, obviously the king has suddenly had an idea. So he says to him in verse 2 what any sensible person says to the king. Oh, go for it, king. This seems the obvious intuitive thing to do, doesn't it?

And yet, verse 3 tells us something very different. Then God speaks. That same night, the word of the Lord came to Nathan.

And what he says is, you and David have got some vague sense of this, but that's not my plan just now. And David's not the man to build this temple.

So you go and tell David everything that I am going to tell you. What I proclaim to you, what I reveal from heaven about what I am doing here on earth is what you are to go and tell David.

[22 : 03] He is a God who is a clear speaker to human beings. He is revealing his purpose to human beings. and he is revealing himself clearly in light and in understanding.

He is not a God who hides himself. He is not a God who is silent. He is not a God who leaves human beings to be muddling around in the dark seeking him amid all sorts of doubt and all sorts of uncertainty, all sorts of bafflement, all sorts of weird spiritual things you can go and seek the divine in.

Now this is a God who turns all our human thinking upside down. See, human reason, human philosophy, human spirituality says God's mysterious, God's distant, God's hidden.

And we must search for him and we must define him. We must analyze him and come to our conclusions. But no, not so.

This God, the true God, is a proclaimer. He proclaims himself. He proclaims his own workings, his own ways. And he reveals himself clearly to his world in words that can be understood.

[23 : 21] And that's precisely what's demonstrated here in this story of God speaking to David the king through Nathan the prophet. It's so important. I just want to highlight two senses in which God proclaims himself.

It's something we have to grasp very, very clearly. First, God proclaims himself. God speaks in the Bible so that he can be known, so that he can be found, so that a relationship between human beings can be created with God himself.

God speaks, in other words, to create relationship. Now we know, don't we, that all relationship begins with communication, with speaking.

That's how it begins. You converse, you speak to someone. And when you do that, you transmit knowledge of yourself to them. And as you do that more and more, you're not just informing them, you're giving something of yourself to them, aren't you?

And the more you do that, the deeper the relationship becomes. And that is because we as human beings in our relationships reflect God who made us. He made us in his image.

[24 : 28] Go back to the very beginning of the Bible and you find that in Genesis chapter 1. How does the whole story begin? God speaks, let there be light, let there be heavens and earth, let there be dry land and so on and so on.

And God speaks the whole of creation into being, into perfect relationship with himself. Everything is in absolute harmony. Everything is very good.

The world in perfect relationship with God. And in exactly the same way by speaking, by revealing himself to people, by proclaiming himself, God breaks into the darkness and unbelief in our human hearts and creates light so that people can see him, so that they can find him, so that they can know him.

Those are the words we began the service with this morning. Just let me read again from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4. If our gospel is veiled, it's veiled to those who are perishing.

In their case, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.

[25 : 37] But God said, let light shine out of darkness and he has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

See what he's saying? We come to know God not through blind searching for him, that's only grasping in the darkness, groping. That's what's caused by the God of this world, says Paul, by the devil.

Now you don't find the light of the true glory of God by searching in the distance, whether it's through highbrow, human learning, philosophy and reason and all of that, or whether it's lowbrow, looking for reincarnation and other mumbo-jumbo like that up in the concert hall.

Now that's not light, that's just darkness. Light comes, says Paul, when God speaks, when God shines his light into our hearts, not just so that we know things about him, but so that we come to know him.

He reveals himself to give personal knowledge to us. It's a relational giving. That word in the Bible, to know, I think you're aware, often it's used deeply personally.

[26 : 48] A man knows his wife and she conceives and bears a child. It's deep personal knowledge. And when God speaks, Paul says he imparts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to human beings.

The theologian Jonathan Edwards says that means that a sense of the gloriousness of God comes into our heart. And in past ages, God spoke clearly through the prophets like Nathan in this chapter.

But you remember what Hebrews chapter 1 says? In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, who is the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature.

That's what we sang a moment ago. God has spoken by his prophets. He has spoken in Christ Jesus. And God is speaking still today by his Spirit. Wherever the word of God, the gospel of Jesus is spoken, God speaks in the gospel of the glory of Christ.

And he says to human beings, let there be light so that people can hear him and know him and respond to him and love him and serve him with joy and go on serving him with joy.

[28 : 11] See, the God we are talking about, the God of the Bible, is a covenant God. He's a God who proclaims himself to human beings so that they may know him. Christian faith is not about religion.

That's all about man seeking to find and understand God. The Christian faith is about revelation. It's about God who comes down and seeks and finds us. It's the absolute opposite. I mean, you think about it.

If God really is God and we are his creatures, then God must reveal himself to us if we're to know him. How else could we possibly come to know God? Because we're created, aren't we?

We're within the whole created order. God is above it. God is beyond it. And without God coming into our world and revealing himself to us from outside, we're no more capable of knowing anything about God than the character in a play is capable of knowing anything about the author of the play that created him.

But God has revealed himself to us because he is a God who speaks. He reveals himself and he creates relationship with us.

[29 : 22] A relationship of covenant. He is our covenant Lord. He's our maker. He's our master. And we are rightly his people. We are created to live under his gracious and benevolent rule.

Of course, as we know from our Bibles, the truth is that we as human beings by nature, we have rebelled against and we have rejected his rule. We have spurned his love to us and we have spoiled that whole creation, that relationship that we are created for.

And that means, of course, that human beings are in no position to put that relationship right, are they? That's always the case in a broken covenant. The most obvious covenant that we speak about is the covenant of marriage, isn't it?

Well, think about the adulterous partner in a marriage, the person who's been unfaithful in that marriage. They can't undo themselves that wrong that's been done.

They can't affect a reconciliation, can they? It must be the wronged party, the one sinned against. It must be to reach out. And that reaching out is often very painful.

[30 : 35] It's often at very great cost. But they are the ones that have to reach out in grace and in forgiveness. They have to speak words of hope and of good news.

Words that say, what you cannot do by yourself, I will do because I will forgive you and I will allow us to be reconciled.

I will open the way to a new future together. And that's the whole story of the Bible, isn't it? The great revelation of the God who does for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves.

He will do it and he has done it for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter, it's God saying to David what he says in verse 4 in verse 11.

Verse 4, it's not you who will build a house for me, verse 4, but verse 11, it's me who will build a house for you. But all through the Bible, it's that same message one way or another.

[31 : 40] God is proclaiming himself, his wonderful covenant purposes to rescue, to restore lost people, broken people, rebellious people and give them a future.

It's God's word of self-revelation all through this book and it comes to its great zenith in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom, as John says at the beginning of his gospel, in whom the revelation, the eternal word of God, actually becomes flesh and dwells among us.

Our God, the true God, is the great revealer. He proclaims himself so that he can be found and known and loved even by lost, rebellious sinners because that revelation climaxes in the one who was in the beginning with God and who was God and who was made flesh and dwelled among us to bring salvation.

The whole Old Testament is God proclaiming to the world his promises and preparing the way of salvation through the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. The whole New Testament shows us the fulfillment wonderfully of all that was promised through the prophets.

All God's personal revelation, the covenant word of the covenant God to us, so that despite the sin that separates us from him, we can truly know him.

[33 : 05] Not because we build houses for him, not because we build temples for him, but because he has come and promised to build a great household for us and invited us to be part of his household, his family, his everlasting church.

And that's why we preach the word of God here every week, week in, week out, because God is a speaking God. God proclaims himself. He's proclaiming his great salvation today still.

And if you're new here, you could ask many people here this morning and they would say to you, that's exactly what happened to me. God shined the light of his glory into my heart and brought me to know him in Jesus Christ.

Once I was darkness, but now light in knowing the Lord. So that's the first thing. God proclaims himself so that he can be found and known and so that relationship can begin with him.

And the second thing, and this is really the thing that's particularly in our chapter here this morning, God proclaims himself and goes on doing so, so that that relationship with his people can grow and be nurtured and continue to be blessed.

[34 : 19] So that people will go on knowing and serving and pleasing God. Once we are committed to this God, God doesn't then just say, well, I'll leave you to yourself now to work out how best to live for me.

Just do what's in your heart. Just do what your conscience tells you. Now, even at our best, that's not enough, is it? Because our consciences are part of our fallen human nature still.

And we need God's proclamation. We need God's ongoing revelation of himself in his words if we're going to live as God wants us to live. So look at David. Here's David, the great king, the man after God's own heart.

And yet, even here, David gets it wrong, doesn't he? Verse 4. David means well, and actually God acknowledges that later on in 2 Samuel chapter 6.

We're told explicitly, God says to David, you did well, but it was in your heart to build a temple for the Lord. David meant well, but meaning well isn't enough.

[35 : 24] God's plan, because it wasn't God's who was going to build the temple. And so God had to step in and tell him plainly, you've got it wrong and here's the right way.

In fact, as we'll see as we go through the chapter, he tells David a lot, lot more than that. But for now, just let's get that clear. So important. As Ralph Davis puts it, God's servants often mean well, but lack the wisdom of God.

Isn't that true? Of course it's true. But here's the thing, God doesn't expect us to come up with all the answers by ourselves, because God is a God who speaks.

He proclaims his word to people so that by listening and by obeying his words, we won't get it wrong. And we won't make a mess of our relationship with him.

Even the Lord Jesus understood that so clearly, didn't he? What did Jesus say when he was in the desert being tempted by the devil? Read about it in Matthew chapter four. He didn't just go by his intuition, did he?

[36 : 31] When Satan told him to do this and this and this, because they sounded very plausible things. What did Jesus say? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

God. So it's extraordinary, isn't it, that in the church today so often people think that they know better than King David. They know better even than King Jesus.

They think that we don't really need to constantly be proclaiming the words of God today. That's passé, that's old hat. That won't do in our postmodern world.

Get rid of all that just Bible preaching and so on. We need new ways of interacting with the people in today's world. Really? When God says it is his words that bring light and life.

When God says that is what imparts knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Extraordinary, isn't it, that people should think that we don't really need all of God's words, all of God's commands for life in order to walk properly with him.

[37 : 41] But people do think that. It's why they want to chop out bits of the Bible. I don't seem to fit with today's world. Or at least keep those parts of the Bible closed.

Just follow our own feelings, our own intuitions, what's in our heart. But all sorts of things, moral matters, especially today's sexual matters. That's how you think.

You need this chapter, don't we? especially these first few verses. Because the Bible is clear, not just here, but all the way through, that God is not that kind of God.

God is a God who speaks. And he speaks clearly so that we might understand what he says and obey. And David knew that.

That was what was reinforced to him here. It wasn't enough for him to have it in his heart. It wasn't enough for him to follow in general. what he thought God's will was.

[38 : 41] He needed God's clear, commanding words. So that he would truly know God's heart. So that he would truly be able to walk in God's will for his life.

And friends, so do we. Do you remember what Jesus says in John 14? Whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

He who has my words and keeps them. Because God's word abide for us. And that's why we've got these books, the Bible, so that we may abide in God's love.

He proclaims himself to us in these words so that our relationship with him will go on and will continue and will grow and will strength and be blessed as he wants it to be.

And so that we will be fruitful as he wants us to be. Jesus goes on to speak about that, doesn't he? In John 15, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

[39 : 47] That's why God speaks. That's why he goes on revealing himself to us so that we will be a joy to him, so that we will be what he has made us to be. But more than that, Jesus says, these things I have spoken to you, that my joy will be in you and your joy will be fulfilled.

You want to be a person full of joy? Listen to God's words. Our God is a covenant God. He's a God who proclaims himself to us, who speaks, who gives us his words and his words are revelation.

They are eternal life. So that we might have, not far away, not distant, not out of reach, not wrapped in mystery and confusion, but so that we will have near and accessible and understandable a true revelation of God, despite our rebellion and sin.

And so we can have a true relationship with God through his great Savior. And so that we can live gladly and joyfully under the rule of God in his glad service.

Our God is the great proclaimer. He proclaims himself to us. And so the Christian faith is never anything like mere religion. It's a word of divine revelation, the ultimate revelation of God to man.

[41 : 18] As the apostle Peter reminds us, the grass withers and the fire falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was proclaimed to you.

So that means that if we are listeners, then we also must be proclaimers, mustn't we? That we have from him a gospel to proclaim.

And that is the true good news for all the earth. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the God who speaks. you draw us to yourself through your life-giving word, and you keep us walking in your way with your ever-guiding word in these wonderful words in scripture.

So help us, we pray, to be a people who listen, not to our hearts, but to your heart, and therefore to be people of your word.

Now and always. Amen.