

## Promises, Promises (#1)

- *Also read Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27; and John 1:1-5, 14, 29-34*

### Introduction

- Different people do directions in a different way
  - some do maps
  - some do sense of direction, compass like
  - some do instructions: "left at the Shell garage, right at the 3rd house on the left...."
- And we cope in different ways when we get lost!
  - some people stop and ask for directions; some people would rather die!
  - but something that can keep you heading in generally the right direction, that will get you close to where you are wanting to go, that keeps you from going to far adrift is very helpful!
  - perhaps get you to the point where you start to recognise things again

### Membership Vows

- Beginning a series that looks at membership vows over next few weeks
  - 1 vow about what we believe, and 4 vows or promises about the practical outworking of that
  - *what does it mean to be a member of this church?*

### What Kind of God?

- "Let us worship God" we say, at the start of each service, as we come to sing each hymn or song.
  - Worship - Worth-ship - says something about one to whom we are directing our attention - God
  - and this first vow also says something about the God we worship
  - sets the overall direction, keeps us from being blown off course
- What kind of God is he that we worship?

### Creator God

#### Awesome God

- Common pictures - old man on a cloud, grand-fatherly figure, a "God of love", nice, but perhaps essentially harmless.
- A former generation would perhaps have had something of a different picture, but much of that has been lost.
- In many people's minds, God is harmless, nice, maybe even a bit woolly!
- That's hardly the picture presented in the passage from Deuteronomy we read just a moment ago! v.17a:
  - "LORD - God - supreme over all gods and over all powers - (NIV) God of gods and Lord of lords, great and mighty, to be feared, mighty and awesome!"
- Not to be trifled with - powerful - a God of love, yes (v.15), but more than just that.

#### Impartial God

- But the picture of the God we worship is not complete even once we mention both his love and his awesome, mighty power and splendour.
- Moses goes on to say something about God's character - the way he acts and reacts.
  - v.17b : He is impartial - fair - upright - just.
- Not swayed by status in society - by wealth - by way we look or dress - by outward shows of devotion or piety.
- God can't be bribed - what could we do to pay God off?

- can't bribe him by our giving;
- can't bribe him by showing up here Sunday by Sunday, or communion by communion;
- can't even bribe him by devoted service, involvement.
- God sees us as we really are - sinners, wrongdoers, disobedient.
- Brings us down to size!
  
- What kind of God?
- Awesome, mighty, powerful... just, holy, upright.

### Compassionate God

- If our picture of God ended there, there would be cause for despair - might as well pack up and go home - there'd be no hope!  
- but it doesn't - praise God!
- God is one who shows compassion to the weak and disadvantaged - the orphan and the widow, the foreigner - those with no other security or protection in the culture of the time Moses was writing.
- Shows same compassion to us - we who are weak and powerless in the face of his mighty power, we who are sinful and unable to bribe or work our way into God's good favour:
- And in particular, God expressed his compassion on the whole human race through his Son:
  - for it was to us that Jesus Christ came as Lord and as Saviour
  - it was for us that he became a man (John 1:14, etc!)
  - it was for us that he lived a life of perfect obedience and humility
  - it was for us that he submitted to his Father's will, and headed for Jerusalem and death
  - it was for us that he allowed himself to be hung up on a Cross to die
  - it was for us that he rose from death, breaking the power of sin and death forever
  - it is for us that he offers new life through faith in him
  - it is for us that this table is set this morning
- It is because our God is not just an awesome & mighty God, not just an impartial God, but also a compassionate God, a God of love.

### Serve Him!

- This God seeks a response from us.
- That's what worship is all about - the reflection of our response to God in every part of our life.
- Some people seem to imagine that no response of any kind to God's love is needed.  
- as if we've all been invited to a party, free, no strings - just turn up - **but if you don't want to come I'll force you to be there anyway!**
- Not the picture Scripture paints.
- We need to respond - to accept God's offer in faith - to turn and serve him.
- **HOW?**
- vs.19 & 20 paint something of the picture - there's the dimension of relationship with God - "worship only Him" - and there's the dimension of practical action - in v.20 "obey" might better be translated "serve" - reflect in our lives God's character.
- Obedience will be part of that, for God reveals much of his character in the commandments.
- But it's not simply mindless obedience - rather likening ourselves to God's way of responding and living.
- The example Moses gives in v.19 is of loving the foreigner, the unlovely.
- True right across the board - act impartially, don't accept bribes, defend the cause of the oppressed, etc, etc.

- That's true worship!
  - and it is enabled by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us!
- To respond to God who is awesome & mighty, to God who is impartial, to God who is compassionate by loving and serving him.
  - may God indeed grant us his Spirit to enable us to respond in worship to him