

HOW BIG IS OUR GOD?

Who has been to the beach this summer? I want to talk about sand today. As you came in, you all got a piece of sellotape with some sand grains on it. Look at them really closely. What do you notice? Very small.

Its 2024. A new year. I wonder what is going to happen this year? I wonder what is going to happen in the world? Gaza. Ukraine. American elections. Riots? Pakistan, Iran Taiwan and China Shipping lanes - world trade.

I wonder what is going to happen in NZ? If it is been anything like the last few years. It could be eventful. Weather events. Earthquakes. What does this year hold? New coalition govt and its policies?

If you have got mortgage, you want to know what is going to happen to the interest rates?

And then of course what is going to happen in our personal lives Some of you will die Some of you will get seriously sick. There will be at least one car accident One diagnosed with cancer. At least 2 redundancies. Not prophecies. But just based on averages.

Now you are all feeling depressed. Lots of good things happen this year too. Some of you might get married. Some of you will become grandparents. Some of you will buy a house. My point is we don't know what this year will bring. It will bring a mixture of good stuff and tough stuff.

We have no idea what life will bring us. While we like to feel as if we are in control of life, that fact is that there is a huge amount that we have no control over. The question I want to ask of you today is this. How big is your God? How big is our God?

Is our God bigger than your worries
Is our God bigger than your mistakes and regrets
Is our god bigger than your past?
Is our God bigger than the cancer diagnosis ?
Is God bigger than the death of a loved one ?
If our God bigger than the loss of your job ?
Is our God bigger than the armies of the world ?
Is our God bigger than the most powerful leaders on the planet ?

Is our God bigger than the most powerful weapons on the planet

And of course we would say Yes, he is. He is God. But the question is does this translate of our hearts? To how we live our lives. To our prayer lives? To our worry? Do we really know how big our God is. Have we truly grasped how big God is?

In the late 1950s, anthropologist Colin Turnbull spent some time with the BaMbuti pygmies of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He published his observations in the book, *The Forest People*,

He tells the story of a 22 year old Mbuti man named Kenge who accompanied Turnbull on a drive to the mountains. Kenge had supposedly never left the Ituri forest before. On seeing some buffalo in the distance, he mistook them for insects. As the car approached and their apparent size increased, Kenge became confused as to how they transformed into buffalo. He made the same mistake with a boat at some distance on a lake, thinking it was a small piece of wood.

Turnbull's explanation was that, having spent his life in the forest, Kenge had not been exposed to large vistas and so had never acquired the ability to adjust his perception of size for distant objects.

We know the closer you get to something the bigger it gets. So, if we take this principle and apply it to God. How big is our God might depend on how far away we are.

2nd principle. The size of something is relative to something else. My ride on lawn mower broke down recently. It would only steer to the right. But not left. Or straight. So I had to cut the lawns in a series of circles. This took twice as long and made me dizzy. Cutting my lawns with a hand mower is a big job. It is possible but it is hard work. But with the bigger ride on, it is a very manageable lawn to cut. So the size of the job is really related to the size of the equipment you have.

When we are faced with an issue, it can look enormous. It can threaten to overwhelm us. Suddenly lost our job. A relationship goes sour.. We fail badly. Human



tendency is either often to minimize. Not that bad. Or catastrophize It's the end of the world.

But if we could truly grasp how big God was, it would help put our struggles and the things we face this year into perspective.

So how big is God? One way we can get a sense of scale of God is to look at his creation.

Take a grain of sand as a point of reference. As you came in, I gave you a piece of sellotape Grains of sand on it.

They reckon there is 75 0000000000000000 grains of sand in the world 7.5 sextillion But...

3 x 75 0000000000000000 atoms on one grain of sand

There are more atoms in one grain of sand than all the grains of sand in the world 10,000 stars in the universe for every 1 grain of sand. When you next go the beach, think about that.

If the earth were a grain of sand, sun would be pool ball But sun is a tiny star compared to some. VY Canis Majoris is 39 metres across in our model. Our solar system is part of the milky way galaxy If Earth was the size of a grain of sand, the Milky Way would still be unimaginably huge, around 46, million km wide. Put that into perspective it is about ¼ of the way to Mars

But the milky way is one of many galaxies in the universe. The earth as a grain of sand does not work any more as an illustration because the size is too great. So now lets make the milky way galaxy be represented by one a grain of sand. How big is the universe? 372 metres. Manageable. Auckland sky tower 328. Put a little bit more on it.

This is the universe that Hebrews says was formed at God's command Heb 11:3 This is the universe that it says God upholds by the word of his power Hebrews 1:1-3 This is the universe that it says that Jesus fills when he ascended to heaven. Ephesians 4:9-10

Read Isaiah 40:12-15, 25-31

I was reflecting on a phrase in Acts 9:31 over the holidays. Early church grew stronger as they lived in the fear of the Lord. This is not a fear like being afraid. The early church were profoundly aware of the greatness of God. Of how big God is. And of his propound love for them. God

was not to be taken lightly. Or mocked. Or ignored. Or made a tack on to their lives. Sin was not to be trifled with. They were so aware of the greatness of God that it impacted their lives, their decisions, their prayers. All that they did. And as they lived in this awe, they grew stronger

Take your grain of sand. Remember every one grain of sand 10,000 stars God knows by name Remember more atoms in that one grain of sand than all the grains of sand in the world. Remember that God's thoughts about you are more than all the grains of sand in the world because he loves you. Can't help but think about you. Remember that whatever mountains come your way this year, they are but a grain of sand to God of the universe.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

What areas of life for you seem sometimes to be bigger than God? Not in your head, but in your heart. Or, what kind of things do you tend to worry about or get stressed about?

Does your prayer life reflect the greatness of God? What is the evidence for your answer?

Of the different illustrations from a grain of sand, which one captured your imagination the most? Why?

How can we connect the idea of the greatness of God with the fact that he deeply cares for us. Does God sometimes seem great but distant?

"The closer we get to something the bigger it becomes" Does this apply to God? Does God seem small sometimes because we are not close?

Discuss the statement from Acts 9:31. What might it mean for us at Central to live in fear of the Lord? What would be the evidence? How would it make us stronger?

What hinders you from living with a continual awareness of God's greatness? What could you do to foster a great awareness?



CENTRAL BAPTIST

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS