

**Greater**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC 12-31-2023**

Today is the last day of 2023, so I want to preach a message today that gives us vision for 2024. Some of you might remember, but a few weeks ago I was preaching and in the middle of that sermon I stopped and said that God had just given me our word for the new year: greater. So, we are starting the year off when a sermon series called Greater.

In my study this week – I first looked up the biblical meaning of greater. The Hebrew word for greater means larger in size, intensity or importance. The New Testament Greek word means abundantly more, over and above.

Then I looked up every time the word greater is used in the Bible in several different translations. That’s a lot of verses. There are a lot of biblical themes we can talk about concerning greater. But I felt I needed to start off by talking about God. You see, God is greater than any of us can comprehend! No matter how great you think God is, He is greater!

The NLT of Job 36:26 says: *God is greater than we can understand.*

That means that all our us have a view of God that is too small! God is greater than we can understand!

How do you know your view of God is too small? By the way you talk and the way you live. For instance - If you ever say, “Even God can’t help me with this problem” – your God is too small. Because in reality – He is all powerful and nothing is too difficult for Him!

If you live under guilt and condemnation – your God is too small! Because the truth is the God forgives all sin and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!

If you live in fear – your view of God needs to be greater! Because the truth is that God is love and perfect love casts out all fear!

If you ever think you are all alone in life, your God is too small! Because the truth is He will never leave you or forsake you!

If you ever think, “God doesn’t understand” – your God is too small. Because the truth is - He knows all and understands all. Psalm 147:5 says:

*Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.*

Another way to know your view of God needs to be greater is when you pray small prayers.

God wants us to pray big, faith-filled, radical prayers that touch heaven and change earth by bringing the power of heaven to earth! Too often we pray weak prayers like, "God, help me have a nice day." Really? That's your goal in life? To have a nice day? You need to pray bigger prayers! The only way you can do that is if you have a greater view of God.

That's why the Bible teaches us to magnify God. Magnify means to make greater; to cause something to appear larger; to increase the size or importance of something.

Now obviously – we cannot increase God's size or importance. There is no way for God to actually increase because He is already infinite and without limit. For example, Psalm 34:1-3 says:

*I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.*

So – if God cannot be made any bigger, what can it mean when the Bible says to magnify the Lord? The word "magnify" can be used in two different senses. It can mean to make something appear bigger than it is, as with a microscope or a magnifying glass.

Or it can mean to make something that may seem small or insignificant appear to be as big as it really is. This is what telescopes help us do with the stars that look so small but which are actually huge in the vast universe God created.

So there are two kinds of magnifying: microscope magnifying and telescope magnifying. Microscope magnifying makes a small thing look bigger than it is. Telescope magnifying makes a big thing look as big as it really is.

So, when the Bible says to magnify the Lord, it does not mean to make a small God look bigger than He is. It means to make a big God look as big as He really is.

There is nothing and no one greater than God. And we must pursue a continuously greater view of God's greatness.

The enemy's plan is to deceive people into believing that God is smaller than He really is. The duty of the Christian is to think and act in a way that will magnify God by seeing Him as great as He really is.

Another way to know you need a greater view of God is if you have trouble praising God or worshipping God or giving to God. Psalm 69:30 says:

*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.*

We will never magnify God until we become thankful for who God is and what God has done!

That's why we must constantly remind ourselves of what God has done for us! Because we tend to forget the goodness of God which we have experienced. Isn't that why David said to himself in Psalm 103:1-2

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.*

We are called to magnify the greatness of God. But you can't magnify what you haven't seen. And you can't magnify what you quickly forget!

That's why we should remind ourselves of the ways God has blessed us! And when we do see and do remember God's greatness – we should magnify Him with thanksgiving! We should declare that God is greater than anything!

There are so many different directions I could go in this sermon, but I felt led to address God's greatness in three areas. I've taught you before that we all have the same three enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. I'm going to show you today how God is greater than all three.

## **1. God is greater than the world**

The word "world" is not speaking of planet earth – but the current order of things on planet earth. The Greek word is cosmos, which is the opposite of another Greek word – chaos. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament say that cosmos speaks of human order. On the surface, that might not sound bad.

But 2 Corinthians 4:4 says that Satan is *the god of this world*.

Mankind was created to rule the earth. But when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden – called the fall of man – they forfeited their rule to Satan. The domain originally delegated to man fell to Satan, who became what is now called "god of this age" and the "prince of this world."

The cosmos – the present order and systems that rule the world - are under the destructive rule of Satan. When you understand this, you will never blame God for any of the disorder and evil in our sinful, confused, diseased, tragedy-ridden, and tormented world! 1 John 5:19 says:

*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

That's why we are at war with the world! Satan is in control of all worldly systems including the political system, education system, entertainment, and media – none of these things are wrong in themselves, but when Satan becomes god of

them - they are designed to pull people away from God's truth and light into Satan's deception and darkness.

The Bible tells us how to overcome the world in 1 John 5:4-5  
*Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — even our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

It takes faith in Jesus to overcome the world.  
 It takes faith in God's word to overcome the enemy's words.  
 It takes faith in the Holy Spirit to overcome a worldly spirit.  
 And through faith we can and will win the war with the world!

Jesus also said in John 16:33 – This is the Amplified Version

*In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. (I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.)*

Whatever the world throws at you– it threw at Jesus and He overcame it!  
 For you! Because of that:  
 You can overcome the world's hate with God's love!  
 You have something greater than the world's wisdom – God's wisdom!  
 Jesus has joy that is greater than the world's joy!  
 Jesus has power that is greater than the world's power!  
 So overcome the world of lies with the word of truth in Jesus name!

## **2. God is greater than the flesh**

The flesh is the unrenewed part of our soul that wants to live to please ourselves. The flesh is one reason why some people do not want to magnify God with thanksgiving. The reason is that it detracts from their own glory, and all people by nature love their own glory more than the glory of God. This happens when people are more concerned about how they look in worship rather than how God looks.

You see – there are two types of people in the world: those who love to magnify God and those who love to magnify themselves! One root of ingratitude is the love of one's own greatness. Genuine gratitude admits that we are beneficiaries of an unearned gift; everything we receive is because of the grace of God!

The natural man hates to think of himself in terms of neediness and insufficiency and inability. That robs him of all his glory. And when someone loves their own glory and self-sufficiency, and hates to think of himself as sin-sick and helpless, they will never feel any genuine gratitude to God and so will never magnify God, only themselves.

Those who see themselves as little sinners see Jesus as a little Savior! The only antidote to this arrogance is to acknowledge that we are sinners who cannot save ourselves – but God is our Savior! We can do nothing of ourselves – but we can do all things through Christ! That is the attitude that magnifies God.

You see, God makes a great demand on us, but it is *not* that we be great, but that we cease to be great in our own eyes and become small that He might appear great. We must say what John the Baptist said in John 3:30

*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

The New Living Translation says:

*He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.*

God demands something great from us: that we admit we are not great and that He is greater!

This is bad news to the arrogant, but good news to the humble who are aware of their own unrighteousness and insufficiency and are seeking God for His righteousness and all sufficiency!

Another result of being in the flesh and focusing on ourselves and our insufficiency and failures is condemnation. When we are under condemnation we cannot receive God's forgiveness.

But God wants you to know about the forgiveness He freely offers you. When your sins are forgiven, they are forgotten. The past--with its sins, hurts, brokenness, and self-condemnation--is gone, dead, remembered no more. What God forgives, He forgets. If God forgives and forgets, why are you remembering it and letting it hold you back?

How long do you remember your bills once you've paid them?  
Do you worry about last month's electric bill after you've paid it?  
Doesn't it seem silly to worry about a bill you've already paid?  
Christ has already paid for every sin you have ever or will ever commit.  
It is finished – paid in full!

How many sins had you committed when Christ died on the cross? None. Yet. His sacrifice was for every sin you ever have or ever will commit. So accept God's forgiveness and resist condemnation in Jesus' name!

And when you do struggle with condemnation, remember 1 John 3:20-21

*If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.*

If your heart does not condemn you, you have faith toward God. But if your heart condemns you, God is greater than what your heart says. God knows all things – including the fact that He forgave you.

1 John 1:9 says:

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

But some people cannot seem to accept God's forgiveness. They think they need to add something to it. Or – they think they've done too much or gone too far to be forgiven. That's some kind of twisted fleshly pride to believe your sin is too great for God to forgive. Have the faith to believe that God is greater than your heart and when He says He forgives you, believe that He forgives us.

### **3. God is greater than the devil**

Satan is a liar and two of his biggest lies are about himself. Satan lies to make people think he does not exist. And if he cannot convince them of that, his other big lie is that he is as powerful as God and can overpower Christians any time he wants. This lie keeps people terrorized.

We need a true picture of Satan and his demons. We don't need to fall into the error of either underestimating or overestimating Satan's power. We must know that truth of 1 John 4:4

*Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

Satan is not now, never has been and never will be God's equal. God always has been, is now, and always will be greater. Yet – we still need to stay on alert to demonic attacks.

Satan's attacks are pervasive and persistent. But Satan is not omnipresent – only God is. Satan can only be one place at one time – but he has an army of demons who do his bidding.

Revelation 12 reveals that Satan led one-third of the angels in a rebellion against God and they were all cast out of heaven. Those fallen angels are now demons.

As beings created by God, Satan and his demons are lesser than God. They have less power, authority, wisdom, knowledge – less everything – except for evil. As a created being, Satan's power is limited by the authority of God and what He permits.

By the way – Satan's power is not equal to God's. Satan was created by God and God can take him out at any time. And when the time comes, He will. In Revelation 1:17-18 Jesus said-

*I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*

Only Jesus has the power over death and hell. He has the only key – but He can give it to others. For instance, Revelation 20:1-3 says:

*I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.*

I love that passage – because so many people think Satan is so strong. But when the end comes – it only takes one angel to throw him into hell. Satan is limited, judged, condemned, and reserved for judgment. The outcome is certain, though the process may seem tedious and slow.

Satan is destined to fail in his continuing rebellion against God. He was defeated and disarmed at the cross of Christ and his final defeat is sure! His final defeat will happen according to Revelation 20:10

*And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

And God has given us authority over Satan. Always remember, greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world! We must wage spiritual warfare against the devil – but actually he is already defeated. Colossians 2:13-15 says that God took every sin that we would ever commit and nailed it to the cross. Not only that:

*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

Christ has defeated and disarmed the enemy we fight!  
 So, we don't fight for victory, we enforce the victory Jesus already won!  
 We do not fear the devil – we fear the Lord!  
 Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world!

Satan has some power – but God has all power!  
 Satan has some knowledge – but God has all knowledge!  
 Satan can only be one place at a time – but God is everywhere at once!  
 Satan's time is limited – but God is eternal!  
 Satan's full of hate – but God is love!  
 Satan is full of depression – but God is full of joy!  
 Satan will steal your peace – but Jesus is the Prince of Peace!  
 Satan wants to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came that we might have life!  
 Abundant life now and eternal life forever!  
 All because our God is greater than anything!

God is greater than the world!  
God is greater than our flesh!  
God is greater than Satan!  
God is greater than anything!