



## **SIX SANE TRUTHS FOR A CRAZY WORLD PART 1: GOD IS CONSTANT**

*Jeff Peabody  
New Day Church  
Federal Way, WA  
February 6, 2005*

We're starting a brand new series this morning that I'm calling "Six Sane Truths for a Crazy World." Does it feel like a crazy world to you? Do I need to go to the effort of proving it or can we all agree that it feels more than a little out of control?

The pace of our culture is increasing constantly. Did you know the amount of sheer information in the world now doubles every 4 years? We've created more information in the last 20 years than in the past 5000. I read a statistic this week that said an average weekday edition of the New York Times contains more information than a person living in the 17<sup>th</sup> century would have had in a lifetime.

Speaking of the news, there's more craziness for you. Every day brings stories of the bizarre and cruel and unbelievable and shocking and tragic. It is a crazy world, so much so that it can overwhelm us and drag us down.

Even my own personal, tiny world is crazy just by itself. This week was incredibly busy and stressful at work. And wouldn't you know it – somebody in my department has to take a week off while his wife has a baby. (His world was a little crazy too – they delivered the baby in the car!). Everyone I talk to has stories of just how busy and stressed their lives are. The pace is so fast.

So this morning, I'd like to get us started on a journey to find some points of sanity in the middle of the mess. Is there anything we can turn to that is sure?

I saw a guy being interviewed a couple weeks ago who had survived the tsunami. It wasn't just that he had managed to stay dry – He was actually in the water and swept out to sea. He said the force and speed of the water was unreal, and he was completely sucked under several times.

At one point, he saw the top of a house sticking out of the water, and he thought to himself, "If I don't climb up on top of that roof, I'm going to die." So he fought with every ounce of strength he had left to pull himself up on that rooftop. And he lived to tell the tale because of that.

We're looking for the rooftops. What is solid that we can cling to? When life is swirling all around us, what can we grab that will give us a sure foothold?

There is nothing more sure and secure than God himself.

**Proverbs 18:10**

*The name of the LORD is a strong tower;  
the righteous run to it and are safe.*

We rush inside and bar the door and find a refuge from everything that's pounding at us. That's why Martin Luther could write, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing." When life is chasing us down, our instinct should be to run for cover in God himself, because he's the only safe place. He's the source of our sanity and peace when our world is falling apart.

So what I'd like to do over the next six weeks is take some time to examine a few highlights of God's character that are particularly relevant when life is wild. When we're feeling defeated, what about God gives us a reason for hope?

We don't often stop long enough to really contemplate God's nature. Even when we do, we don't have words that are really adequate to contain him. We sang this morning that he is indescribable, and that is true. Our attempts to name his attributes are partial and imperfect, because we're too small to comprehend him fully.

Have you ever looked at diamond and really studied it? I bought Karin's wedding ring several months before I asked her to marry me, and I would take it out of the box and just stare at it, watching it catch the light. Diamonds sparkle so much because of their facets being cut at different angles.

God sparkles like a diamond. Each angle, each facet of him you look at, you see another color and another flash of light. Talking about God's character isn't just a list of dictionary definitions. We don't need a technical report on what he's like. We need a way to take him out of the box and hold him up in the light in a way that will remind us of his brilliance and beauty and will draw us into worship.

I'd like to read a few verses out of Isaiah 40 that will serve as a backdrop for our discussion, that provide some great inspiration:

**Isaiah 40:21-31**

*Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?*

*He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

*“To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.*

*Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God”? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

That’s a remarkable passage. One of the points it makes is that God is the everlasting God, and the truth I’d like to look at with you today is the fact that God is constant. He’s the same God he always has been. We can read stories in the Bible and feel very disconnected from the people and places in it. But our God has not changed one bit since the days of Adam and Eve.

I’m not even sure we know what that means, because everything about our world is marked by change. People change, physically, emotionally and mentally. There’s growth and decline. Governments change, whether you’re in a peaceful democracy of a country where governments are overthrown violently every few years. Cultures change. Technology changes. Everything in nature changes and has a life cycle of some sort.

But not God. God is always the same. He’s consistent through and through. We need to say more about that though, because God is constant on more than one level. I see at least four ways in Scripture where his changelessness shines through. We can use the word SAME to help us remember the four ways.

First, God is constant in his

## **S - SOLID CHARACTER**

When we talk about God’s character (his distinct, personal nature), we can think of him being constant on two levels: All the way *through* and all the way *along*.

Do you ever eat Swiss cheese? How do you know it’s Swiss cheese? Partly by the flavor, but mostly we think of the part that isn’t cheese. We think of the holes it has in it. In the process of being made, Swiss cheese develops all these bubbles of carbon dioxide, which leave air pockets. So it isn’t solid like cheddar or Velveeta.

Sometimes people are like Swiss cheese. We have these pockets of inconsistency in our character. We have ideas and values that sometimes don’t match up. We might be really good in some areas but have huge gaps in the way we’ve developed in other areas.

There aren't any of those holes in God's character. He's solid all the way through. There are no sides of him that don't go together, no places where he falls short in his personality or abilities. We've talked before about that word integrity, which really means completeness.

That's all the way through. God's character is also consistent all the way along. God's basic values and way of thinking do not change over time. In the whole course of human history, God has remained true to who he is.

Isaac and Addison play a lot of four square at school, and most of the time they really enjoy it. But once in a while they come home mad about the way someone was playing that day. Usually, when we ask them about it, we find out that it was because someone was trying to change the rules in the middle of the game.

People try to change the rules or bend the rules all the time. Why? Because we're looking for ways to get ahead, to get what we want. We have the need to feel better about ourselves, or to prove that we're right or to show that we're better than someone else.

God has none of those needs. He is complete in and of himself. He's perfect. To change would mean he had a need to improve. If he did change, he would become less than perfect.

When God sent Moses to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, Moses questioned God about what he should tell the people.

### **Exodus 3:13-15**

*Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"*

*God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

God is who he is. There was no need for him to describe himself any other way than that he exists. He's totally self-contained, and that means he has no hidden motives for his actions. He doesn't need anything outside himself.

That means we can always count on him to do what is right. He won't act one way on one day and be a completely different God on another day. He isn't moody or random in the way he operates.

### **James 1:17-18**

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

We're not always good at predicting what God will do, but he will never do anything that is out of character for himself.

God isn't just consistent in his character. Another thing about him that stays the same is

### **A – AMAZING WORD**

Things happen when God speaks. Genesis says world came into being when he spoke. The Bible tells us that God's word is alive and active and able to do powerful things.

And just like God himself, his word is consistent all the way through and all the way along.

#### **Proverbs 30:5-6**

*Every word of God is flawless;  
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*

And then it goes on to say

*Do not add to his words,  
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*

There's no need to add anything to what God speaks because it is complete and anything we add to it will just be taking away from it. God's word is flawless.

It's also consistent through time. We read from Isaiah 40 earlier, but there's another verse in that chapter worth looking at:

#### **Isaiah 40:8**

*The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God stands forever.*

Did you ever see the movie Hook? Robin Williams played a grown up Peter Pan who had children of his own. He was all about business and never had time for his kids. But he kept making promises to them saying, "My word is my bond." But he'd never live up to his words.

God lives up to his words. He's got the consistent character to back up what he says. Even when we have the best intentions of being true to our word, circumstances can interfere and make it impossible. But God is bigger than any circumstances and he will always be true to his word.

The Psalmist once wrote,

**Psalm 119:152**

*Long ago I learned from your statutes  
that you established them to last forever.*

When we talk about God's word, we've got it in recorded form as the Bible. And if God's word is constant, that means the Bible is just as valid for us today as it ever has been. It doesn't get outdated because times change. The insights it gives are just as relevant to real life today as they were when they were first written. As sophisticated as we may think we are, we will never outgrow what God has said.

I will always remember a guy I met once who came to a men's study I was giving a talk at. He worked the fishing boats up in Alaska. That's a hard life, and he was a classic example of a salty sailor who lived hard and had an edge. He hadn't been to church much in his life, and I'm not really sure how he ended up there that morning. But he was really struggling. He shared pretty openly about where he was at, and it was pretty raw. I didn't quite know what to say to him, and his needs really didn't fit my lesson plan. But I had been reading in Lamentations 3 that week, and it seemed like it might apply to his situation, so I just started reading a chunk of it. Here's what I read.

**Lamentations 3:19-22**

*I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall.  
I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.  
Yet this I call to mind  
and therefore I have hope:*

*Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,  
for his compassions never fail.*

And as I read, that tough sailor started crying. This big old burly guy who looked like he was from ZZ Top had tears running down his face. It had nothing to do with me and everything to do with the amazing word of God that speaks to people's deepest needs and gives them hope that nothing else will give. That's what God does for each of us, too.

That's why Jesus would say this:

**Matthew 4:4**

*It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

His word feeds us and it never loses its ability to sustain us. God's character never changes. His word never changes. The next thing about God that stays the same is his

**M – MIGHTY POWER**

In those very first verses we read this morning, we saw a picture of how powerful God really is, that with a single breath he can knock over kingdoms and nations.

That power of God is unending. He doesn't need recharging. He doesn't get tired and worn out.

**Psalm 121:3-4**

*He will not let your foot slip —  
he who watches over you will not slumber;  
indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

When kids get sick or are hurt parents would like to be there for them. When kids get a bad cough or fever, parents worry and would sit up by their bedside all night if they could. But parents get tired, and sometimes the best we can do is sleep in the same room next to the sick kid and hope we wake up if it gets really bad. Even when kids are in the hospital, parents sometimes have to get up and leave the room. As much as they'd like to be there every single minute for a hurting child, sometimes it just isn't physically possible.

But God is the Father who always has energy for his children. He never needs a nap, never looks away for even a minute.

**John 5:17-18**

*Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."*

He has the energy to keep at it. He never gets tired. He never gets tired of forgiving. He never gets tired of helping. Bottom line: He never gets tired of us. Our questions never wear him out. God will always be there for us because of his mighty power.

No matter what we're facing, God will outlast it. No matter what the battle or fear or temptation or grief, God has all the strength to overcome it and carry us through it. He is a constant God with a constant supply of energy and resources.

That's good because we sure wear out. God actually lets us borrow some of his power. Back to Isaiah:

*He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

In a world that takes it out of us and that wears us down, God gives us his mighty power to make it another day. And he never runs out of it.

In addition to his character, word and power, God is constant in one more way that is worth looking at this morning and that is his

## **E – ENDLESS GRACE**

It's one thing to know that God's nature is consistent or even that what he says stays the same. But it's important to know that his way of dealing with me personally never changes. His grace never changes.

What is grace? It's that kindness and goodness he shows to me that I don't deserve. It's the cross. It's the effect of Jesus' death on the world and on my life. The impact of that never changes.

That's because it isn't just God the Father who's consistent: It's also Jesus.

### **Hebrews 13:8**

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

Karin had a conversation recently with someone who has been a Christian for quite a while. This person had put their faith in Jesus and believed that his death and resurrection made it possible for them to get back into a right relationship with God. But they were feeling like God was punishing them for some of their mistakes.

Let me say this very clearly: The punishment that Jesus took for your sins and mine was enough. God isn't in the business of punishing you for your sins. Otherwise, Jesus' death has no meaning. There may be natural consequences for our actions. We may feel badly about things we've done. God may even bring some corrective discipline our way. But once we've claimed Jesus' death on the cross for ourselves, we are forgiven and we don't need to fear that God will pay us back for the things we do. Jesus is constantly in God's presence as a reminder that everything has already been taken care of.

The writer of Hebrews compares Jesus to a priest who represents people before God.

### **Hebrews 7:23-28**

*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

*Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

Once for all. Once for all people, once for all sins, once for all time. God's grace is enough and it never changes.

In the book of Malachi, God said,

**Malachi 3:6**

*I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.*

It is his consistency that preserves us, that gives us a chance to make it. We are saved by his grace that never ever ends. As we come to the Lord's Supper to celebrate that again, let's take a few moments to thank God for being unchanging. To help you focus, here are a couple questions to consider:

What am I counting on in my life? Where do I get my sense of security? Everything around us changes except God. He's the only sure thing.

Is there a promise of his I can claim this morning? What is happening in my life that needs to hear a word from him?

Where do I need his consistent power in my life? Where am I weary and fainting? I can ask for his strength.

And have I put my trust in his endless grace? All it takes is giving in and accepting it. Saying please and thank you. Please forgive me Jesus. I need you Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for forgiving all of my sin all the time.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. The crazier the world gets, the more that truth means.