**Isaiah 55:8-9 “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the Lord. 9“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

In the last several weeks, we’ve looked at sayings that are not in the Bible and, really were somewhat un-Biblical. Some were a direct conflict of the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel demands mercy, commands love, and flows from Grace. Anything that dismisses Grace in favor of worldly efforts and focus must be rejected. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*Ephesians 2:8-9. The moment we forget that we are saved by an undeserved gift straight from God is the moment that we are on our way to being a Pharisee and a stumbling block for those who seek to know Jesus.

 Tonight though, we’re going to look at a saying that, though not in the Bible, though it is not found in scripture, it is certainly a true saying about our God. Many of us have said it – The Lord works in mysterious ways or God moves in mysterious ways. This saying isn’t in the Bible, but it is certainly a description of what all of us have experienced in our walk with God. All of us can relate times that things were not supposed to work out, resources appeared just when we needed them, loved ones improved even as the doctors shook their heads, and mysterious, unexplainable things happened that we knew could have only come from God.

 This saying seems to be from a poem written by William Cowper in 1773 - *God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform; He plants his footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm. Deep in unfathomable mines Of never failing skill; He treasures up his bright designs, And works His sovereign will. Ye fearful saints fresh courage take, The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust him for his grace; Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face. His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour; The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower. Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan his work in vain; God is his own interpreter, And he will make it plain.* The incredible thing is that William Cowper wrote this while recovering from attempted suicide. God brought beauty from his suffering.

 In our scripture tonight, the prophet Isaiah gives us truth about the God we serve. Verse 8 says *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.* Aren’t we glad that God’s thoughts are not like our thoughts or His ways like our ways? Speaking only for me, I am. I can’t imagine the mess this world would be if the way I think were the basis for how the world was. God’s thoughts are – He who would be first must be last and servant of all. God’s thoughts are – But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you. God’s thoughts are – Forgive them Father, even as the nails were being driven. This is the God we serve and these are His thoughts.

 In John 13:7 gives us a great example of God’s ways not being our ways, His thoughts not being our thoughts. *Jesus answered and said to him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.* Peter didn’t understand at the moment the example of humility and service Jesus was setting, as Jesus knelt to wash his feet, but he grew to understand as he grew in his service to Jesus. Jesus said – you don’t understand now Peter, but you will.

 Many things that come in our lives we don’t understand as they are happening. We don’t understand the sickness, the loss of a loved one, the persecution by someone who used to be our friend, or mistreatment when we were kind. But later, we know. Sometimes years later, we understand. Like Peter understood when he spoke these words in 1 Peter 4:10 - *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*.

 In Genesis 37:28 we read - *Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.* I would think that God’s ways seemed very mysterious to Joseph at that moment, as the camels started to move and he looked back at his brothers looking with hate as he was hauled away. God’s ways probably seemed pretty mysterious to Joseph as he languished in prison for a crime he hadn’t committed. God, You showed me a dream! God, I tried to serve with humility! God, I have been forgotten by those I helped! Listen to the understanding of God’s ways that Joseph has many years later. Genesis 50:19-20 *Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.* I guess it wasn’t all about Joseph after all, but God’s plan.

 And so it is with us today. God has a plan and we are blessed to be a part of that plan. Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.* Some plant, others water, but God gives the increase. It is not about our kingdom, but God’s Kingdom. We’re not here for Him to do our will, but for us to do His.

 Verse 9 of our scripture says *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.* I can think of no better example of this than the death of Jesus Christ. God’s way – The death of My perfect Son will heal the curse brought on by sin. It was so far beyond the way that men think that it was prophesied for centuries, fulfilled centuries ago, and is still missed and misunderstood even today. How can death bring life? How can the imperfect be healed by crucifying the Perfect? How will the Father ever love those who killed the Son? His thoughts are not our thoughts… His ways higher than our ways.

 Over in Psalm 147:5 we read *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.* Isn’t that the God we long to serve? The God that has an infinite understanding. The math is never too hard, the angles too complex, the language too complicated… in fact, His understanding is so perfect that, when we can’t put it into words, our God listens to our hearts – Romans 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Our God hears the very sighs of our hearts. His understanding is infinite.

 Let’s hear the end of the matter Isaiah 46:10-11 *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,’ Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.* God knows the end from the beginning, before we were formed in our mother’s womb, He knew every breath we’d take*.* That’s the God I trust. The One that sees around corners and understands the valleys as well as the mountains. The God that is so mysterious in His ways, yet so personal in His presence. Our God does work in mysterious ways, but it is always for our ultimate good as Romans 8:28 promises *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* It’s no mystery that God loves us, He is for us, and He will one day gather us to Him in heaven. Our God does move in mysterious ways. The Bible proves it through and through.