Take the Limits Off Of God

Psalm 78:40-41  How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! 41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Illustration:
- I once heard a story, several years ago, about a young man who came from an underprivileged background but had vast dreams of traveling the world.
  - After he got his first steady job he immediately began to put back money, a little at a time, to finance his dream.
  - The day came when he had scrimped and saved just enough money to purchase a ticket on a cruise liner that was sailing to exotic Caribbean ports.
    - He was almost beside himself with excitement as he prepared to buy the ticket, only a few moments later realization set in.
    - As a matter of fact, there would be very little money left to eat on.
    - So he pulled together all of his money, purchased some bread and cheese to live on and went and bought the ticket to the cruise ship.
  - It was a long voyage and he vastly enjoyed the fantastic and exotic places they visited.
    - Each day he would take in the sights and sounds of worlds that he had only dreamed of and each evening he would retreat to his quarters on the ship and eat his cheese and bread and drink a little water from the tap.
    - All in all it was a very satisfying trip, and in his opinion, it was worth every sacrifice to finally fulfill his dream.
  - However, one day, on his way back to his room to eat in the evening he happened to pass by one of the large dining rooms on the ship.
    - Standing at the door, beside one of the ships officer he observed the delightful and succulent food.
    - Oh what a feast!
      - Ice sculptures, shrimp and seafood, rich steaks and prime rib, roasted chicken and lamb chops, every protein imaginable.
      - And the vegetables, what an incredible array of side dishes!
      - Oh, and the deserts, chocolate flowed from fountains, wonderful cakes and pies, sweets of every kind.
      - It was an impressive banquet, fit for a king.
    - Sadly, the boy turned and headed back to his room.
  - On that night, the bread and cheese wasn’t quite as satisfying as it had been before.
Each night for the rest of the trip he would sit in his room and eat his bread and cheese and dream about the tremendous feast that was being served in the ships dining hall.

- And each night he would try to comfort himself with the knowledge that he had gotten all he could afford and he should be happy just to be on such a fantastic voyage.

- Finally the day came that the ship arrived back in its home-port.
  - The young man gathered his few meager belongings and was preparing to disembark the ship when he was approached by one of the ship’s officers.
  - It was the same officer that had stood with him that evening outside the dining facility.

- The man asked the boy a curious question.
  - “I’m just wondering sir, have we done something to offend you? I couldn’t help but notice that you never took a single meal with us in the ships dining hall.”

- Blushing the young man shuffled his feet and replied to the officer,
  - “Oh no. You haven’t offended me. I just couldn’t afford such a wonderful meal. I spent all I had on the ticket and a little bread and cheese.”

- With a stunned look the officer replied, “But sir, didn’t you know? I am so sorry to tell you this. The meals were included in the price of the ticket!”

**Bread and Cheese Christians**

- What an incredible tragedy.
  - Talk about living below your means.
    - He could have had it all but he limited himself to the very least.
    - All because he didn’t understand what was really his.
  - All because he didn’t know what was included with the price of the ticket!
  - I stand in this pulpit on this Sunday afternoon and I am convinced that there are many in the house of God that are living below your means.
  - There are many Christians that are living on Bread and Cheese when the very greatest promises of God have been bought and paid for at an old rugged cross.
    - If I took the time this afternoon to poll this crowd there would be plenty of needs.
  - We all have needs in our lives.

- I am convinced that some of us have been carrying around some needs for long, long time that we God never intended for us to struggle with.
  - I’m not talking about storms and hardships, life is going to happen and those storms make you stronger but some of you
have been harboring a hurt or nursing some bitterness in your heart for far too many years.

- Some of you have been struggling with the same temptation and found yourself trapped by the same bondage over and over again.
  - I want you to know, today, that it is not God’s will for those things to drag you down!
    - It’s not God’s will for your life that you walk around all the time underneath a heavy cloud of depression and uncertainty.
      - His yoke is easy, his burden is light, yet some of you insist on shouldering the heavy load of anxiety and stress.
  - I’ve come to this pulpit to tell you that you don’t have to live that way!
    - Jesus said in Luke 12, “Consider the lilies...”
      - They are arrayed in such beauty and splendor that not even Solomon in all of his glory could compare to them.
      - But they never give a single moment to worrying about their appearance.
        - They neither toil nor spin because God takes care of them!
    - He said, “Consider the ravens...”
      - They neither sow nor reap but God feeds them!
    - Which of you, he asks, can add one inch to your height?
      - Yet you worry and despair over the affairs of this life.
      - You are burdened down with things that are beyond your control.
    - But don’t you know, You’re heavenly father knows what you need!
      - Seek ye first the kingdom of God, he says, and all these things will be added to you!
    - Some of you have been living below your means.
      - Some of you have been carrying burdens that you were never meant to shoulder!
        - You need to wake up and realize that it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom!
  - The devil is like a pickpocket!
    - A good pickpocket steal from you and you don’t even realize that you’ve been robbed!
      - Some of you have lost some things over the years and you don’t even know it!
        - Little by little, Hell has been robbing you of your faith.
        - He’s been stealing your victory.
        - He’s got you convinced that you have to take care of all of your own needs.
        - He’s got you trained to tolerate certain handicaps and stumbling blocks in your life.
He’s convinced you, by default, that this is just another Sunday afternoon and nothing life altering is going to happen in this service today.
  - After all you’ve been here a hundred times before...
  - This is just going to be another ordinary service!

• I can’t help but wonder how we can expect the ordinary when we serve an extraordinary God!
  - If you’ve got a need today, let me introduce you to my God!
    - He’s anything but ordinary!

• Your need may be huge, but my God is bigger than your need!
  - Your problem may be life shattering but my God is the master of picking up broken pieces and putting them back together again!
    - If you’re hungry,
      - He’s the God of heavenly manna!
    - If you’re thirsty,
      - He’s the one that cause fountains of living water to spring up in dry and barren places.
    - If you are confused and troubled,
      - He is the Prince of Peace!
    - If you are depressed and down,
      - He is the Joy giver.
    - If you are sick in body,
      - He is the great physician.
    - If you are bound and oppressed,
      - He is the great liberator.
    - If you find yourself in an overwhelming storm,
      - He is the one that speaks to the winds and the waves, saying, “Peace! Be still!”
  - You’ve got your needs today, but I’ve got their answer today!

• The old song says,
  - My God walks on the water,
  - He rides on the Wind,
  - Ain’t no power in hell gonna stop his wings of love!
    - He reigns mightily from heaven!
    - He tells the sun when to shine.
    - He tells the tide where to stop!
    - He calls forth the rain from his storehouse in heaven.
    - He is the creator of all that is.
    - In him we live and move and have our being.
    - He is the ancient of days, the mighty God, the everlasting king!
    - He is all in all, he is everything that you need him to be!

• And we come to church with our BIG, BIG problems and dilemmas and have the audacity to believe that somehow they are out of reach of God!
  - I’ve come to tell somebody in this house today that our God can do all things!
• Nothing is impossible with him!
  • Nothing!

Limiting God
• As a matter of fact, there is only one thing that can limit God.
  o Your lack of faith.
• In Matthew Chapter 13 we find Jesus in Nazereth, his home town.
  o By this time his reputation has been noised abroad.
    ▪ This is the miracle worker.
    ▪ This is the one that multiplies fishes and loaves.
    ▪ He heals the blind eyes, the lame leap and run, the dead are raised.
  o But, when he walks into Nazareth, they say, “Is this not the carpenter’s son?”
    ▪ “Hey! Isn’t that Mary’s boy?”
    ▪ And they were offended in him because they were familiar with him and, from the very outset they limited what he would do in their midst.
  o The tragedy of the story is the fact that He went there with many mighty works that he desired to do.
• As a matter of fact Matthew 13:58 says that “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”
  o In other words, if they had not allowed their familiarity with him to limit their faith then Jesus would have done many mighty works among them.
    ▪ But, by virtue of their limited faith, they limited God!
  o Some of you have grown complacent in the presence of God!
    ▪ A familiarity with the house of God and the things of God
    ▪ instead of the person and power of God has cause you to limit your expectations of what God can and will do.
  o And your limited expectation, your limited faith, puts limits on God!
• I’m here to tell you, on a Sunday afternoon, that God has prepared a table for you in the presence of your enemies.
  o It is his desire that you would feast upon the riches of His glory and leave this house today with victory in your heart, living water bubbling over on the inside, full of the manna of the Holy Ghost!
    ▪ But if you don’t believe!
    ▪ If you limit your faith!
    ▪ If you curb your expectation today,
      • then you are going to go home with much less than what God intended for you to have!
  o Some of you came into this house with your mind already made up that your were content with your bread and cheese!
    ▪ But God came into this house and spread a table for you and said, come and dine!
• Here’s the tragedy of the situation, If you don’t turn your faith loose, God will leave this house today with many mighty works yet undone!
  o Somebody under the sound of my voice needs to realize that you’ve been living on bread and cheese!
    ▪ God has more for you!!!
  o Somebody needs to recognize that you don’t have to go home with your needs unmet!
    ▪ You don’t have to go home still bowed low under the heavy weight of a burden of stress and anxiety that you were never meant to carry!
  o Its high time that you took the limits off of God and Let God be God in our life!
    ▪ Its high time you turned it all over to him and trusted him to work some things out for you instead of trying to carry the load all by yourself!

Thomas Faith
• The problem is that some of us have Thomas faith.
  o Thomas had natural human faith that was based on physical evidence.
    ▪ He could believe only what he could see or touch.
• This is because we live in a realm that is dominated by our five senses.
  o The things that we can see, touch, hear, taste and smell are the things that are real to us.
• Everything that we experience in the flesh is experienced in one or more of those 5 senses.
  o The problem comes in when we attempt to limit or faith in God to those 5 senses!
  o The problem comes in when we try to pin God down and make him operate within the realm of our understanding!
    ▪ We try to package him up in a nice tidy little box.
    ▪ We try to explain him and contain him.
      • You can’t explain God!
      • You can’t contain God!
      • You can’t define God!
      • He doesn’t operate by any of our laws!
      • He is all mighty! He can do anything!
      • But we have a tendency to limit him!
• We create certain needs in our mind that are, somehow, outside of or above the authority of God.
  o We set certain needs aside and accept the idea that God can’t do anything about those things.
• We believe that God has some power, but we struggle with the idea that he has ALL power!
  o We believe that God can do some things but we struggle with the idea that he can do ALL things!
• We believe that He can forgive sins, and fill us with the Holy Ghost
  o But we can’t believe that he can heal cancer or open blinded eyes.
• We believe that when we go under the water in Jesus name that our sins are washed away,
  o but we can’t seem to believe that He has the power to set us free from certain fleshly addictions!
• We believe that He can fill us with the Holy Ghost and cause us to speak in another language as the spirit of God gives the utterance
  o But then we stumble at the idea that he can meet all of our needs today!
• Jesus asked the Pharisees in Mark 2:9, “Which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven or take up thy bed and walk?
  o What Jesus was saying was, “Hey, I’m almighty!”
    ▪ Its all the same to me!
  o I can heal the sick just as easily as I flung the stars into the heavens.
  o I can cast sins into the sea of forgetfulness just as easily as I divided the light from the darkness!
    ▪ God can meet you big need just as easily as he meets your small ones.
    ▪ If he has the power to wash your sins away in baptism then he has the power to meet all of your needs in this place today!
• I remember a story that I heard about the little boy that came home from Sunday School.
  o His dad asked him, “Johnny, what did you learn today?”
  o Johnny proceeded to tell the most fascinating tale.
    ▪ He told of the Children of Israel trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red sea.
    ▪ He told how the situation was helpless how it appeared that all was lost.
      • But then, all of sudden God’s army showed up.
    ▪ And, as engineers built a bridge across he Red Sea,
      • God’s fighter planes attacked the Egyptian Army,
      • Great bombers blasted them to smithereens
      • and God’s special forces completely devastated the Royal Guard.
    ▪ When Johnny’s story was over,
      • the smoke was drifting from the battlefield,
      • the Children of Israel were safe on the other side of the Red Sea
      • and Egypt’s army was a charred pile of wreckage.
      ▪ It was total Victory.
  o Johnny’s dad looked at him and said, now son, I don’t think that’s the way your Sunday School teacher told the story, is it?”
    ▪ “No dad,” came the sheepish reply,
      • “but you wouldn’t ever believe it the way she told it!”
• Sometimes, we are just like little Johnny!
  o We box God up in our nice tidy little package, and we confine him to our senses.
    ▪ We limit God in our lives!
    ▪ We limit what he can do in a service like this one!
  o We have that power;
    ▪ we, alone, have the ability to tie the hands of God.
  o We can stop him from doing what he wants to do in our lives!
    ▪ We can limit our faith in God
    ▪ and by so doing we can limit the mighty God!
• But I came to this pulpit, this afternoon, to tell you that you that God doesn’t fit in your box!
  o You can’t contain God in your limited understanding!
    ▪ You can’t contain God in this sanctuary!
    ▪ You can’t contain God in your pocketbook!
  o You can’t contain God in the earth, or in the heavens, or in the heaven of heavens!
    ▪ He is bigger than His creation!
  o The bible says that the Heaven’s are his throne and the earth is his footstool!
    ▪ He is almighty, and all knowing.
      • All power in heaven and earth yields to his name!
      • He is the mighty God!
  o He is bigger than your problem.
    ▪ You can’t contain him, today...
    ▪ **But you can limit him!**

They Limited God
• That’s what the Psalmist bemoans in our text.
  o Somehow, the Children of God, in the wilderness, managed to forget all of the mighty miracles that brought them to that place.
    ▪ Somehow they failed to remember the fantastic miraculous deliverance of God
    ▪ and, instead, stumbled in their unbelief.
• Those who had seen God do such great and wonderful things,
  o couldn’t find the faith to believe that he could deliver them from their current dilemma!
    ▪ The Psalmist laments the fact that,
    ▪ time after time,
    ▪ they turned back and limited the Holy One of Israel!
• Some of us are guilty of the same thing!
  o Some of us have forgotten what God has already done for us!
    ▪ Some of us need to remember that, if he did it before He will do it again!
  o It is time to take the limits off of God!
- It is time to turn God loose in our lives,
  - in our homes,
  - in this church,
  - in our faith!
- It is time to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord,
  - to let go and let God be God!

**Close**
- I find that our biggest problem is not believing that God CAN do things.
  - It is believing that God WILL do things.
- Consider Martha.
  - After Lazarus was dead and in the grave for four days, Jesus finally heeded the call and came to Bethany.
    - Martha, hearing he was coming, ran out to meet him.
  - When she saw him she cried out, “If only you had been here, Lazarus wouldn’t have died.”
    - She believed that he could have healed Lazarus!
  - Jesus looked at her and told her rather frankly in John 11:23, “Your brother will live again.”
    - But Martha responded, “I know that he will rise again at the resurrection.”
  - She believed that he could raise Lazarus from the dead.
    - It wasn’t a problem with believing that God could.
      - It was a problem with believing that He would!
- Some of you know that God can!
  - You’ve been in this thing long enough, you’ve seen enough to know that God can.
    - Your problem is that you’ve somehow convinced yourself that God won’t!
    - That your problem is too small, your faith is too weak or your enemy is too much.
  - Somehow you’ve convinced yourself that it is just your lot in life to carry this heavy burden without any assistance.
    - I come to this pulpit to day to tell you that it is high time that you turned God loose in your life.
- You’ve been living below your means for too long.
  - You’ve been living on bread and cheese while the master has prepared for you a feast.
- Today I hear a call from the throne of heaven, Come and dine!
  - Come, bring your burdens and lay them at the foot of the cross!
  - Come, bring your hurts and soothe them with the balm of gilead.
  - Come, and shed your bitterness and hurt.
  - Come, and find healing for your soul and your body!
  - Come to the master!
- Turn your faith loose and let God be God in your life today!