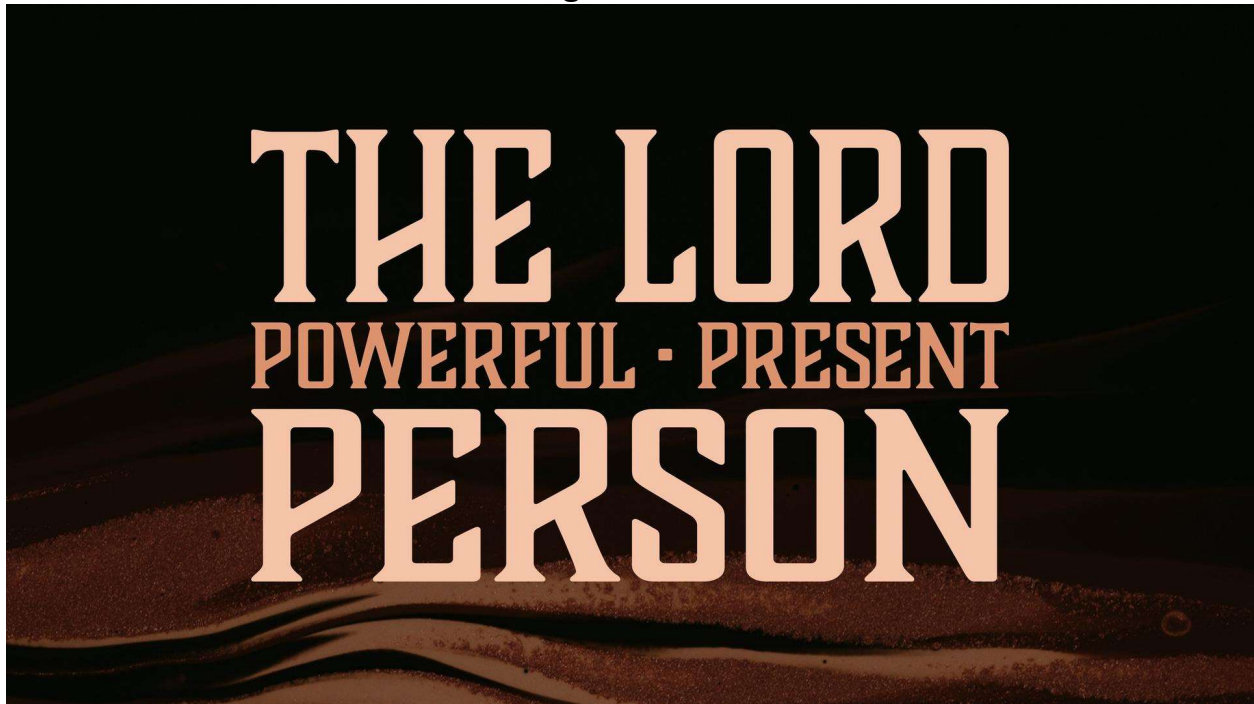


"Has the Glory Departed?"

1 Samuel 4:12-22

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Background

According to Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, babies aren't born with the understanding that objects (and persons!) continue to exist even when they aren't perceived. Babies lack what is called "object permanence" -- which is why babies love to play peekaboo! But they also grow out of peekaboo as they become less and less surprised when mom or dad "magically" reappears from behind their hands. Does our spiritual development follow a similar course? Is there a spiritual equivalent to "object permanence" that we need to develop in relationship to our Heavenly Father? Join us this Sunday as we explore these questions in our ongoing miniseries "The LORD: Powerful, Present, Person".

Sermon Text 1 Samuel 4:12-22(NIV)

¹² That same day a Benjamite ran from the battle line and went to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dust on his head. ¹³ When he arrived, there was Eli sitting on his chair by the side of the road, watching, because his heart feared for the ark of God. When the man entered the town and told what had happened, the whole town sent up a cry.

¹⁴ Eli heard the outcry and asked, "What is the meaning of this uproar?"

The man hurried over to Eli, ¹⁵ who was ninety-eight years old and whose eyes had failed so that he could not see. ¹⁶ He told Eli, “I have just come from the battle line; I fled from it this very day.”

Eli asked, “What happened, my son?”

¹⁷ The man who brought the news replied, “Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”

¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell backward off his chair by the side of the gate. His neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and he was heavy. He had led^[a] Israel forty years.

¹⁹ His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, but was overcome by her labor pains. ²⁰ As she was dying, the women attending her said, “Don’t despair; you have given birth to a son.” But she did not respond or pay any attention.

²¹ She named the boy Ichabod, ^[b] saying, “The Glory has departed from Israel” — because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, “The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”


Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

2. Sunday Questions:

1. Theology of Presence vs. Object Permanence

- The sermon compares a child’s development of object permanence to a believer’s need for a theology of God’s presence.
 How do we cultivate a faith that trusts God’s presence even when He feels invisible, and what practices help us avoid “peekaboo faith”?

2. Anchoring God to Objects or Symbols

- Eli, his daughter-in-law, and the elders tied God's presence to the Ark, leading to despair when it was lost.
👉 In what ways do we today anchor God's presence to objects, places, or even people—and how can we discern when symbols have become substitutes for God Himself?

3. The Danger of a "Theology of Absence"

- The sermon warns that if our sense of God's presence is tied to fragile things, their loss can lead us into despair.
👉 How have you or your community experienced moments of "Ichabod"—times when it felt like God's glory had departed—and what helped restore hope?

4. God's Image in People, Not Objects

- Genesis 1 reminds us that God's true image is reflected in people, not in artifacts or buildings.
👉 How does seeing people as God's image-bearers reshape the way we treat others, especially those we might be tempted to dismiss as "ungodly" or "profane"?

5. Living as Temples of God's Spirit

- The sermon concludes with the New Testament truth that God's Spirit dwells in us, making us His temple.
👉 What would change in our daily lives, relationships, and communities if we truly believed that God's glory is not "out there" but living within us and among us?
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