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A Bigger, Better Picture
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I want to start out by thanking you. First, thank you for having me. I love being here with you. I have attended this church many times, and it is a privilege to share a message with you this morning. I also want to thank you for the blessing this church has been to my family, especially after my grandfather, Larry Jackman, passed away a few years ago. So many of you have been great friends and a great help to my grandparents over the years, and I have enjoyed getting to know many of you as well. Thank you for all the ways you have been there for us. I know there are many other families who could echo those same thanks.

It was also a lot of fun to get to know your students and your youth team better when I was their speaker at the “Deep Freeze” winter retreat at Camp Berea this year. We explored some of the areas in our lives where we need to have our picture, our understanding, shattered so that God can put the pieces back together the way they were meant to be. You have a fantastic group of students and leaders here at Brewster Baptist. It was great to hang out with them this winter at camp.

“Encountering God in Creation”

Today we are going to wrap up a four-week series on “Encountering God in Creation.” As I have been getting ready for this message, I have really enjoyed coming alongside you and watching these services online.

In the first week of the series, Pastor David talked about the joy we can experience as we encounter God in creation. We can draw closer to God as we spend time in nature and God is revealed to us. As Pastor David read from **Romans 1**, God’s invisible qualities can be understood from what he has made. I love the way Pastor David talked about taking walks in nature and talking to God and meditating on Scriptures like **Psalms 23**. In fact, many of the things we will talk about today are things God has highlighted for me over and over again while I have been on walks in nature.

The next week of the series, we were challenged by Pastor Tom to remember that we were created both to have a connection with the rest of creation and to care for that creation. God has entrusted us with the care of his creation, and he is counting on us to be faithful stewards of that creation. If we love God and are his people, we will value what he has created. As Pastor Tom shared, this is not just the responsibility of the few. This is the charge given to each one of us.

Then last week, Pastor Jonathan drew our attention to all of the things we can learn from creation. Specifically, he reminded us to learn from the flowers and pointed us to Jesus’ call to “*note the flowers*” whenever we are pulled toward worry or anxiety. As Pastor Jonathan shared, creation teaches us amazing truths. God can be trusted. We cannot control everything. We need to stay connected. We are loved by God, and he is enough. There is so much we can learn.

This morning, we are going to wrap up this series by pausing and asking *one more time*: **What is it that God reveals to us about who he is and how he is at work in the world** when we slow down and consider him in creation? When we encounter God in creation, what do we find?

Let's start by looking together at ***Psalm 19:1-4 (NLT)***: *"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world."*

Here we see not only that God can be understood through creation, but we see something specific creation reveals about God. **Creation proclaims the glory of God.** When we encounter God in creation, we find glory.

The word that is translated as "glory" here is "kabowd." It means weight, splendor, or copiousness. It is a word that has *oomph*. A lot is packed into this five-letter word. To recognize God's glory is to catch a glimpse of God's awesomely vast greatness and goodness.

One of the ways that creation reveals the glory of God is in the great variety of things God has created. Let's look together a little further into the Psalms at ***Psalm 104:24-27 (NLT)***: *"O Lord, what a variety of things you have made! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. Here is the ocean, vast and wide, teeming with life of every kind, both large and small. See the ships sailing along, and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea. They all depend on you to give them food as they need it."*

Even if we just consider the ocean—one small piece of God's creation—it holds an incredible variety of creatures, and God created all of them. He is the one who holds it all together. From pieces too large for us to understand right down to the smallest detail; big and small, everything relies upon him.

When I first stepped into the role as the youth and young adult pastor at Walnut Hill Church several years ago, I spent a couple of days away at a camp in the Berkshires with another staff member seeking God's direction and guidance for our student ministry. As I was walking on my own down by a pond at the camp, I was asking God what it was that these students needed. Why had he brought me to this group? What did he want me to do?

As I looked across the pond, I saw a small mountain on the other side. I was struck by how big this mountain was and how small it made me feel, even though it was small for a mountain. God reminded me that he had created that mountain, even if it was small compared to other mountains, or the sky above it, or the universe in which our whole world is a tiny speck. God used that mountain to tell me to help youth and young adults see a bigger picture of who he is—to expand their view of him and help them to know that no matter how big they imagine him to be, he is bigger. **God is bigger than we think he is.**

As I was thanking God for this, I was walking backwards and stumbled a little. When I turned to catch my balance, my eyes were drawn to a small clump of yellow flowers. They were beautiful. God used them to remind me that the same God who created the massive mountains created these intricate flowers. This massive powerful God who created the universe also created and cares for these little flowers and cared about them enough to make them beautiful and vibrant. As Pastor Jonathan reminded us last week, Jesus wants us to notice the flowers. God used the clump of flowers to tell me to help youth and young adults see a better picture of who he is – to help them see that he is always good and that he loves them. **God is better than we think he is!**

As I continued to reflect on what God had shown me through his creation, it became a call that still clarifies my purpose in ministry, even as I have stepped off of the staff at Walnut Hill and into regional ministry to youth and young adults. I am called to help youth and young adults across New England see a bigger, better picture of who God is and who he created them to be.

One of the reasons I love coming to Cape Cod is that when I stand on the beach, God often reminds me that I need a bigger, better picture of who he is and who he created me to be.

Think about your favorite beach here on Cape Cod. My favorite beach is First Encounter. My wife and I were engaged there 20 years ago this July. I love going to the bay at low tide and standing in the tidal pools and looking out at the water.

When I am standing there looking out at the huge bay that I know is connected to an even bigger ocean, I feel a bit like David must have felt looking at the night sky when he wrote **Psalm 8:3-4 (NLT)**: “*When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?*” I feel humbled. God is so big! Who am I?

But then, I also feel *honored*, because I see the incredible life all around me in the tidal pool and I remember just how much God does care for us. Seeing the greatness and goodness of God through creation gives me the freedom to walk in *humble confidence*. It gives me the humility to know everything is not about me and doesn't rely on me, but it also gives me the confidence that comes with knowing that the God I serve—the God who knows me and loves me—is the God upon whom everything relies. *He is in control.*

Of course, there is another change that God used to increase my humility. It happened seventeen years ago this past Wednesday. On May 3, 2006, I became a father. Heather and I have brought each of our four boys to the Cape as babies to put their feet in the sand and dip their toes in the water. Bringing my kids to the beach has given me a whole new appreciation for this wonderful piece of the world God has created.

My sons needed Heather and I to bring them to the beach and show them its beauty and help them know how to interact with God's creation, but we needed them, too. They forced us to slow down and notice things we had forgotten to pay attention to. They helped us see things through different eyes.

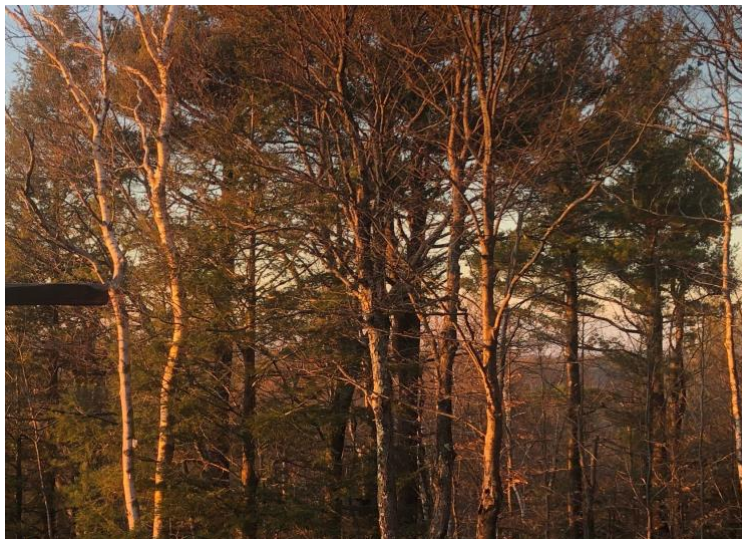
Even now, as the boys are older, each member of our family sees things differently at the beach. I may be trying to show my boys one thing while they are each noticing things that are completely different, and we are better for it. We help each other have a more complete picture of just how big and how good God is when we can see things through a different perspective, and that is beautiful.

It is one of the reasons I care so much about intergenerational ministry within the church. The different generations need each other. Younger generations need those of you in older generations to help them know how to engage their faith in the world around them. They need to learn from your perspective.

But you also need to learn from their perspective. Our students and young adults see the world differently, and the things they discover about who God is and how he is at work in them and in the world around them, are vital for our churches. **Together, we can have a bigger, better picture of who God is than we could ever have on our own!**

As someone who spends my life working with youth and young adults, there is one more walk through nature I want to highlight. Hopefully, it will be a helpful reminder as you walk through intergenerational ministry here at Brewster Baptist. I was leading a retreat for a group of youth leaders and we took a silent hike together. We prayed and asked God to show us what he wanted us to see and then we hiked the 45 minutes to the top of the hill together in silence. When everyone was at the top, we spent some time sharing what God had brought to our attention.

For me, one of the most significant things from that hike can be seen in this picture below.



When we got near the top of the hill, we hit the golden hour. As the light shone across the woods, I noticed that so many of the most beautiful areas that caught my eye were actually areas of brokenness. Fallen trees. Jagged rocks. Broken branches. God reminded me, **it is beautiful when the light shines on broken things.**

It is kind of like the driftwood we see down on the beach. It is broken and beat up, but when the light hits it just right, it is beautiful. And when that piece of driftwood is placed in the hands of a master artist, it is used to create something even more beautiful. It can become a masterpiece!

Our youth and young adults face a world that is full of brokenness. The pretty picture they have been sold of how they can be successful and happy is failing. That is true for everyone, but it is especially impactful for youth and young adults as they figure out how to engage in the world around them. They need to experience hope in the midst of brokenness.

They need to learn the same thing that Paul learned when he was facing the thorn, the hardship, that he writes about in **2 Corinthians 12**. We can be glad in our weakness and brokenness because Christ works through our weakness. When we are weak, we are strong, because there is hope in Jesus. God is at work all around us bringing beauty in the midst of brokenness.

In our brokenness, we learn the same thing we learn as we encounter God in creation. **God is bigger and better than we could ever imagine, and he loves us.**

So how do we respond to that love? How can what we have been learning these last four weeks go beyond a nice discussion and impact how we live?

I suggest we all need to practice *intentionality* and *gratitude*.

For intentionality, I would like to challenge you each day this week to pray, to pause, and to take a picture.

First, start each day with a simple PRAYER before you leave your home: ***“God, will you help me to learn from your creation today? Will you show me a bigger, better picture of who you are and who you have created me to be?”***

Second, PAUSE throughout the day to look around at the world around you. Set a couple alarms on your phone or your watch. Plan to take a walk or eat your lunch outside—whatever it takes to slow down and notice God’s creation.

Finally, during one of those pauses, get out your phone or your camera and take a PICTURE. This will do two things. First, it will serve as a *reminder* to you of what God has helped you see in that moment. Second, it can serve as an *encouragement* to the rest of the church.

Please share your photos this week and the church will post some of them on social media. That way everyone can be encouraged. Submit your photos at bit.ly/BiggerBetterPicture and upload them to Google Drive. (You must be signed into your Google account.) Or email your photos to sharon@brewsterbaptistchurch.org.

So, that will help us practice intentionality. It is also important that we practice gratitude and give thanks to God for just how BIG and how GOOD he is.

Instead of a closing prayer, I would like us to end with ***Psalm 100 (NLT)***. I read this psalm at my grandfather's funeral, and since then, I have been reading it all over New England. *"Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation."*

Amen.