

8/13/23 Worship Service

Message – ElRoy Wiens “Beauty”

A long, long time ago in a place far away, Adam – the first human was created and placed in a beautiful garden. This garden had lush, colorful trees, shrubs, vegetables, and fruit. It had many distinct types of animals. We have clues related to how long ago this was – between 200,000 and 100,000 years ago. We do not know how long the stay in the garden of Eden was. We do know that it was very pretty in the garden, that in the cool of the evening God came to walk and talk with Adam, and that words are inadequate to describe the beauty of the garden.

Adam did not have to pull weeds (there were not any), he did not have allergies (like I do) or negative reactions to the wide variety of plants. The animals were tame and friendly. Adam did not worry about what to eat or when to eat. Everything was right at hand. Adam did not worry about what to wear, there was no shame, chill, or fear associated with wearing nothing.

Adam did not live a life of leisure. Genesis 2 describes the process of naming livestock, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air. God brought all these creatures to Adam – to see what he would name them.

God saw that Adam needed a helper, made Eve from part of his body, and brought her to him. Now the two could work together. Maybe she helped him remember the names, or identified and corrected the color types, or noticed features of the creatures that Adam missed. Neither Adam nor Eve worried about what to wear, nothing was fine.

Is there scientific evidence that this ever happened? Yes, but indirectly. Modern science has discovered from examination of DNA samples that ALL humans share a common “mother” – Mitochondrial Eve.

Mitochondrial Eve is the female biological ancestor of humans, aptly named the mother of all humans. It might seem very unusual or even impossible, but the DNA inside the mitochondria presents this phenomenon quite clearly. There are two types of DNA, the most familiar to us is individual DNA which gives each one of us a unique identity. There is one other DNA string that

a human child inherits from his/her mother. Tracing this DNA back leads us to Mitochondrial Eve, who might have been the biblical Eve!

So, what about Adam? Why aren't there traces of his DNA? Hmm, could it be that – because Eve was formed from one of his bones, they had identical DNA?

One evening in Red Rock Canyon Utah, we noticed the start of a rainbow. As we watched, the rainbow expanded from the base, then the opposite side started, and suddenly the two halves of the bow connected. Then my wife noted that an outer, second rainbow was starting to form. I captured both rainbows, but the second, outer rainbow is less clear. Evidently seeing two rainbows is rare.

So – tell me; on the first, inner rainbow what are the colors from the outside of the curve to the inside?

Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet.

Now tell me, on the second, outer rainbow what are the colors from the outside of the curve to the inside?

Violet, Indigo, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red – the same colors but different (reflected) reversed order.

From Genesis 9:12-16 A rainbow is a sign of a covenant between God and humans – specifically Noah and his family but kept by God over the centuries.

From fables that originated in Ireland, is there a pot of GOLD at the end of the rainbow? Which end?

No, no there is not. Well now, do I have evidence, some proof, some observable reason there isn't an end to a rainbow? Absolutely! My brother, who was a commercial pilot, and I have both seen rainbows from the cockpit of an airplane flying above 10,000 feet. Sometimes from that

vantage point high above the earth, you can see a rainbow the way God sees it – a FULL circle. There is no “end of the rainbow” to find.

Now I have never seen this, but my brother has on multiple occasions flown his airplane directly into a rainbow. The rainbow appears to grow, slowly at first then more rapidly, expanding so rapidly that it “disappears”! Why? The plane was flown through the center of the rainbow.

If we get an afternoon shower and you are all bummed out about being stuck inside, watch the clouds because if or when there is a break in the clouds and the sun begins to poke through; you might just spot a rainbow!

Another breathtaking moment is the sunset. One evening this spring, I was driving home and noticed the sun was beginning to set. I turned onto 90<sup>th</sup> street (sometimes called the Moundridge road) and just as I cleared the last of the hedge trees, I just had to stop the car – well ok; after I pulled into a field access road. This is probably the most dramatic picture I have ever taken – a gorgeous sunset. Our neighbor Jim and Diana Schmidt’s silo and barn are in the foreground with an astounding array of colors in the sunset.

We often go to Salina, and the interstate takes us near Coronado Heights. There are just a few places that have a clear view of the small building at the peak, but I managed to capture a sunset with a silhouette of Coronado Heights in the foreground.

Have you ever watched bird migration? Canada geese fly to the south as winter approaches and return as winter wanes. Most of us have seen these phenomena, but one thing that isn’t obvious is how they share the lead role. They generally fly in a “V” formation with the strongest bird at the tip of the flight. The others fly in the wake that the lead goose makes by taking on the full force of the wind. As the lead goose tires, another that has “rested” takes the lead position. I have no idea how they navigate as they travel. Perhaps they smell and/or see water bodies.

How often are we so preoccupied with minute details that we completely miss something awesome that God placed there for us to see and enjoy? I notice this especially when I am

driving a car and I am mostly concerned about staying alert, being aware of other vehicles coming up extremely fast behind me or others driving too slowly to be on an interstate. I sometimes find this when I am mowing or working on an outside project. I also notice this when I sit outside but my mind remains focused on something besides what is going on around me and I miss something, or I miss a lot.

Often the beauty of nature is right in front of us, and we just miss it. When I sit on my front porch and look around, the most likely first visitor will be a mosquito. Now that is a bummer. But one day in mid-June after mowing the lawn, my first visitor was a butterfly. It decided to make a perch on my jeans and just sat there enjoying the view. I would have liked to make a video of this butterfly opening and closing its wings – but I know my camera makes a clicking sound in video mode and that would make the moment disappear. I made the next best move, trying to capture the moment when the butterfly wings were fully spread. This took a dozen or more tries, but I captured one fully open wingspread.

There are multiple flower beds in our yard and in our daughter's yard, and it is difficult to tell when the best moment is to take a picture of the opening blossoms on those flowers. I must often ask my wife or my daughter what the flower's name is. I have given up trying to remember, I take a snapshot and use it to recall what God is trying to show me about the beautiful world he made for us. There is spectacular beauty available to us if we just take the time to observe these flowers. Here is a rose bush with open buds at sunset.

We took a trip to Texas to follow the bluebonnet trail. We chose a time to drive when the bluebonnets were in full bloom in many places. These pictures show the color spectrum of these beautiful plants near Marble Falls, Lano, and Fredericksburg Texas. We even found a town (Elroy) named after me.

If you ever get to the Hawaiian Islands, make sure you have your camera with you and ready to snap a photo. Do not settle for a driving tour – walk the beach, the pathways, the places that draw your attention. Maybe a waterfall coming from seemingly nowhere but you can hear the noise from way off, or a coffee plantation with some of the bright red Kona coffee beans [I love

coffee], perhaps a hole in the rocks with waves crashing the beach and blasting water through the “blowhole”, or a waterfall flowing into a brook and washing right under your feet as you stand on the bridge.

One of the highlights of a cruise in Alaska was whale watching. They travel in “schools” and one of the methods whales have developed to catch fish is to circle their prey, then rise under the fish with open mouths. When they are near the surface of the water, they close their mouths, drain excess water out their gills, and enjoy dinner. Their tails extend out of the water as they flip over and dive. Later that day we saw seals that congregate on islands in the Arctic waters, sometimes they crowd so densely on the tiny island that the rock appears to be black.

Some of the spectacular moments of a Mediterranean cruise we took were in Athens and surrounding areas in Greece. We have pictures of the ruins of the Acropolis - which is the stadium where Greek royalty waited for word from the battlefield brought by a runner (this was the first marathon) and the philosopher’s hill where Paul presented his arguments for believing in Jesus Christ to the Greek critics. (Acts 17: 22 – 31)

I have been fascinated with both cars and airplanes since I was quite little. When jet airplanes fly overhead, the contrails left behind are highlighted by the setting sun. These contrails are not only gorgeous, but if the winds aloft are light, they remain intact for a long time.

Sometimes you must get into a different environment to see beauty that is not available in the flatlands. Loretta and I were in Angel Fire New Mexico recently. I was both up and awake one morning to grill sausage - breakfast for six. I turned towards the forest behind the cabin and saw the sun behind a deer calmly watching me within twenty yards. I have seen deer, and I have seen the sun backlight objects, but this is the first time I saw a deer with one of his ears illuminated by the sun. I continually try to capture a picture of a hummingbird perched rather than flying. This is as close as I have so far. The beak is moving – but the birds’ wings are folded. I have considered how agile and fast these hummingbirds are. Their little wings are muscle powered at 720 to 5400 BPM giving them tremendous ability to travel FAST and change

direction RAPIDLY. By contrast, a typical human engineered helicopter blade circles in the 120 to 400 RPM range.

My parents taught me a prayer when I was young, one that we would repeat (from memory) before each meal. "God is great; God is good; Let us thank him for this food; By his hand we all are fed; give us Lord our daily bread." One thing about memorizing a prayer is that it becomes rote – you never really think about the deeper meaning of the words you repeat. Focus on the last stanza. It was not terribly long ago that food on the table was a product of at least one member of a family working hard all day long. The reward for a long day's work was either a loaf of bread or enough money to buy a loaf. That is what the family ate for the evening meal, perhaps the only meal. Most of us know stories about that kind of existence, but do not know about it personally. Put this story in contrast with our neighbor Darcy Nickel harvesting wheat in a field near us. If people living in 1900 would see how rapidly and efficiently wheat is harvested, they would be astonished. For some people, bread comes from corn. This year dryland corn is doing quite well. I hope there is enough rain coming before the corn stalks dry off, since the cobs are not filled out yet. The field pictured is located at the intersection of K15 and 90<sup>th</sup> road and managed by Darcy and Floyd Nickel.

Over the years I have noticed a recurring theme in the Gospels. There are at least twelve parables spoken by Jesus that begin with "the Kingdom of Heaven is like..." Perhaps he started this way because there are no adequate words in any human language that can successfully describe heaven. I have often wondered why Jesus did not just come out and say something like "Heaven is this wonderful place for you to spend the rest of eternity." Well, he didn't. Maybe he prefaced his parables this way to shape and change ideas about how to live your life in a manner pleasing to God.

There are many stories floating around about human interaction with heaven, this is one of my favorites. A rich man arrives at heaven's gates with a bag of gold in his hand. He intends to extend the use of his earthly riches and power in heaven. St. Peter meets this rich man at the gates of heaven and inquires about the contents of the bag. The rich man glows with pride and

holds open the bag of gold for St. Peter to see. St. Peter takes the bag, opens a closet door behind him, tosses the bag inside, and closes the door. The rich man is FURIOUS and demands to have his gold returned, but St. Peter asks him “why did you bother bringing contaminated asphalt with you on your journey to heaven?” [the streets of heaven are paved with pure gold – Rev. 21: 21]

From the gospel of John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” We understand Jesus is the Word. This “beginning” is what humans describe as negative infinity. God and the Word always were, and have always been eternal. In John 14:6, at the last supper, John quotes Jesus “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” There are many human beliefs that indicate other ways to heaven, nirvana, happiness, or whatever; but in my mind this statement from Jesus is exclusive and correct. One does not get to go to heaven because he/she attends a particular church, does charitable deeds, or is a child of this or that person. One goes to heaven because of their personal belief that Jesus died for their sins (He is the sacrificial lamb) and they are willing to follow Jesus. The best biblical descriptions of heaven are in Revelation 21 and 22.

A lot of people wonder about heaven. My understanding of heaven is that it is eternal – it always was and always will be. Those that go to heaven will be there with no ending. When we get to heaven, our soul will dwell in our eternal body. From what I gather, we could appear to others in heaven as we best looked in our earthly bodies.

One hard to understand concept is that, because we are children of God, we are FIRST generation brothers and sisters of Jesus. We will communicate with our parents, siblings, children in terms of being in the same generation.

This gets even more interesting when you consider that some of the great scientists – perhaps Albert Einstein (physics equation  $E=MC^2$ ), James Maxwell (theory of electromagnetic radiation), or Sir Isaac Newton (identification of gravity) will be there. Some relatives that migrated to the United States or Canada from Ukraine or Poland or Switzerland will be there. So – how do we

communicate? Certainly not in English, Swiss, Plaut Deutsch, or any other human language. When we are transformed into our eternal bodies, we will assimilate the universal language used in heaven! That will be our means of communication with everyone – no exclusions.

What do we do in heaven? One function mentioned frequently in the bible is singing. Sing what? Praises to God! All the time? I don't know, but probably not. I enjoy singing and have for a long time. I really hope that my eternal voice has a wider range than my earthly voice. I would like to have a deep bass voice like some in this congregation both now and in the past. What else do we do? I like to eat, and I imagine that people in heaven will both eat and enjoy eating. We will also serve others, preparing food, and CLEANING UP. I also enjoy designing electronic and software, solving problems, and building useful products. What we learn on earth may be in anticipation of what we will be able to do in heaven.

Where do we sleep? We don't. From Rev. 22:5 there will be no more night.

What will I be like? I am not sure, but I am hoping to have questions that I have here on earth resolved. I would like a perfect memory. Seems like the older I get, the less accessible the Random Access Memory in my brain becomes and the time that stored memory is retained gets shorter.

Go - tell others about Jesus. Use words if you must.