

**Stuff is Good**  
**May 3, 2009**  
Genesis 1:1-5, 2:4-9  
The Rev. Carolyn McOwen

Last week, Pastor Jeff started us on a new sermon series, entitled, “Surprised by Hope.” He laid out before us the Biblical view of the present age and the age to come. Eternal life and God’s kingdom come, means heaven and earth will be joined together and we will be “surprised by hope.” In our present day, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, God’s kingdom is here, but also not yet. We get glimpses of his kingdom here on earth, but again, not yet, not completely.

To continue to unpack this concept, “Let’s start at the very beginning.” Surprised by hope starts with the creation of the heavens and earth and the creation of humanity, with God saying “it was very good.”

Let us pray.

**I have a question for you.** Where do you go to feel close to God? For me, ever since I was a child, my favorite place in the whole world was and still is the beach. As a child through my teens, I was a competitive swimmer, so I have spent many hours in the water. I taught swimming and life guarded through my college years. But my favorite thing to do was riding the ocean waves on my canvas mat, and then I bought what was called a **hand gun**.

Slide 1

**After I became a Christian, the ocean became even more of a sacred place for me.**

But, as comfortable as I was in the water, I always had a respect for the power, the vastness and mystery of the ocean. Because of this, The Hymn, “O the Deep, Deep love of Jesus” is so meaningful to me. The words are as follows,

“O the deep, deep love of Jesus, vast, unmeasured, boundless free. Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me. Underneath me, all around me, is the current of thy love.”

As much as I love the ocean, it is not my god. Does it point me to the creator? Absolutely. We must understand this; as beautiful as the ocean is, as close to God as I feel when I’m at the beach, the ocean is not my God. God and his creation are not the same thing, they are not synonymous.

**Pantheism** is the belief that God is in everything and everything is a part of an all-encompassing immanent God. In pantheism the **Universe (Nature)** and God are equivalent. As much as I love the ocean, the ocean is not God, but it absolutely points me to the powerful, almighty, sovereign God. C. S. Lewis wrote, “Because God created the Natural- invented it out of His love and artistry- it demands our reverence.”

As we discuss creation, often times the question of the age of the universe comes up. This is a source of great arguments. Those who say the earth is very, very old have many arguments they say to substantiate their claims, based on physical evidence from the observation of the universe. Others claim, from other end of argument, that the earth is relatively young. The fact is, the Bible does not say anything about the age of the earth. It simply makes no comment. **Psalm 90:4** says, “For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past.” And **2 Peter 3:8**, states, that “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.” The Bible puts this whole matter of time and of the age of the earth beyond human’s knowledge. Jesus said to his disciples, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” (**Acts 1:7**)

In the beginning, God- not gods, but God. God always was and always will be- the Alpha and the Omega. This is the same God who in the New Testament was called “love”. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. The One, Living God created a world that was not himself, but most definitely reflected himself. This creation was, from the very beginning, an act of love. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. God of love created a good world. He created humanity out of his goodness and love. Because he loved us so much he also gave us a choice on how we were to live. In the weeks to come on this series

“Surprised by Hope,” we will get into the discussion of sin and fallen creation, but for today, we are focusing on the goodness and purity of God’s creation. The scripture we read today represents all of creation, not just the first day. In chapter 1 of Genesis, as the story of creation unfolds, we read the words, “and it was good,” six times, and the 7<sup>th</sup> time, after man was formed, God said, “it was very good.”

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep.” In the beginning, there was confusion, chaos, and emptiness. Creation brought order, beauty, fullness.

With this said, I want to spend a few moments reflecting on the wonderful creation of God- to see God’s beauty, his creativity, his power, to expand our love for our Creator. The first slide is a picture of the universe. The Bible says that the number of stars is beyond computation. [\(Isaiah 51:13\)](#) God “stretched forth the heavens” into limitless expanse which can never be measured and filled it with stars which are a numerous as the sands upon the seashore. What a reminder of height, depth, width, and length of God’s love for us.

slide 2

Slide 4  
slide 3

Yosemite is one of our family’s favorite places. I debated about giving you a scientific explanation on how Yosemite valley was formed, but decided not to, because no matter how it is explain, ultimately, Yosemite’s formation transcends our understanding. This slide is of Yosemite Falls, both upper and lower falls.

You see God’s power, creativity, and majesty everywhere.

slide 5

Edie Robertson, our children’s director, and her family, went to the Grand Canyon over Easter break. What beauty there, understanding how the canyon was created

by the [Colorado River](#). We can explain it historically and scientifically, but we must know that it transcends, goes beyond our comprehension. Nothing is impossible with our Creator God!

This next slide is a picture I took last fall in a small town outside of Boston. The amazing beauty of the fall colors! For me, this picture represents not only the seasons of year, but also the seasons of life.

slide 6

This next picture is one of an ocean shell. I haven't studied them, so I can't tell you much about it, except for the fact that it is a hard, protective outer layer, that was created to shelter a sea creature. Throughout the years, our family have collected so many of them, that we actually have made a lamp out of them, filling a glass cylinder with them, putting together all the electrical stuff. What amazes me is that, in God's economy, this shell was created to house and protect a sea creature, but each shell is so intricate, unique, and beautiful, that crazy people like me, put them together and make a something decorative.

slide 7

Now for the amazing Sand Dollar- there is a Christian legend about the Sand Dollar- it goes like this,

slide 8

There's a pretty little legend that I would like to tell

Of the birth and death of Jesus found in this lowly shell.

If you examine closely, you'll see that you find here Four nail holes and a fifth one made by a Roman's spear.

On one side the Easter lily, its center is the star

That appeared unto the shepherds and led them from afar.

The Christmas poinsettia, etched on the other side reminds us of his birthday, our happy Christmastide.

Now break the center open, and here you will release The five white doves awaiting to spread good will and peace.

slide 9

This simple little symbol, Christ left for you and me

To help us spread his gospel throughout all eternity.

Slide 10

**The culmination of creation** was the creation of humanity. And it was very good.

How can anyone see a newborn baby and not believe in our good, wonderful, beyond comprehension God.

Living on this side of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, if we put our faith and trust in Him as Lord of our lives, we are redeemed people. Due to the availability of information, we know so much more of the crisis and chaos of our world today. Yes, we are in trouble. But know that God redeemed us, and he redeemed us for good. He didn't make any junk, and he WILL make all of his creation whole again. What God created as good, as very good, he will redeem as good.

This NEW CREATION- has already begun to happen in Jesus' resurrection and will be completed when God finally unites his new heavens and new earth and raises us to share in the new world.

**Apostle John tells us in his first letter, (1 John 3:2)** "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this; when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."

After hearing this sermon, my prayer for each of you is to go out and look at the world around you with different lenses. As you see the beauty of a sunset, look to the mountains, observe the different colors of the foliage around, praise God for who he is. Smell the roses, and think of the pure fragrance of God. Ask God how can you make this a better place.

Instead of being frustrated that you can't sleep in the middle of the night, close your eyes and see if you can hear an owl. If it was winter, I would challenge you to feel rain on your head, or stomp in a water puddle. But summer is coming, so sit outside and let the warmth of the sun hit your back and praise God. instead of letting the cry

of a baby irritate you, celebrate the new life. We can experience God's kingdom here on earth now, his new creation now, even though it is not yet.

As you look at the people in your lives. Are there ways you can be kinder, gentler? In what ways, can you reflect God's love. How can you treat others more kindly? After all, stuff is good, God didn't make any junk.

Let us pray!