

Series: Show Me Your Ways
Sermon: The God Who Wants to be Known
Scripture: Ezekiel 36:22-38
Speaker: Pastor Johnny Benz

Discussion Questions:

1. What were some things that stood out to you from this past week's sermon?
2. What are some ways that God has disciplined you in the past? Can you think of any particular part of your character that has come from the discipline of the Lord?
3. What does it mean to be an ambassador for Christ? Who are some people in your life that you can serve as an ambassador of Christ to?
4. Would you say that your heart is more like stone or flesh? What are some ways that you can keep your heart soft towards God?
5. Why do you think some people's hearts are like stone? What might lead to a hardened heart?
6. Do you delight in God's laws? What is your general attitude towards God's laws?
7. What are some areas of your life where you do not reflect the character of God right now?
8. How can you make God known when He blesses you?
9. Do you ever get excited to know God more? What are the ways that you have gotten to know Him better?

10. Applications:

- a. Get to know God better—go to the tent
- b. Be ambassadors for Christ—who can you engage with the Gospel?
- c. Keep your heart soft towards God—what leads to a hardened heart for you?
- d. Give God the credit for your blessings—how can you make it a discipline to outwardly give thanks to God for what He has done?

11. For further study:

- a. Read Ezekiel 37-39: How do these chapters continue the message from chapter 36?
- b. Read Psalm 119: Write down the various blessings that God's rules give
- c. Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21: How does this passage relate to the message of Ezekiel 36?

Message Key Points – Sunday June 24, 2018 – “The God Who Wants to be Known”

1. God will make himself known when he disciplines us. Ezekiel 36:22-23
2. God will make himself known when he changes us. Ezekiel 36:24-36
3. God will make himself known when he blesses us. Ezekiel 36:37-38

Monday

We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says (Rom. 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

Article II Belgic Confession

God makes himself known in a number of ways. A common way of considering two of the principle means is that of “two books”. The first is the book of nature (general revelation), and the second is scripture (special revelation). Additionally, as we learned this past Sunday, we come to know God by how he interacts with us. Let’s first take at the first book, the book of nature.

Observation

Read Romans 1:18-20, Psalm 19:1-4 and Psalm 97:6

What can be known about God from these passages?

Who can rightfully claim that they don’t know God exists or that there is no evidence for God?

Read Acts 17:16-34

What can you observe about the Athenians and their perception of the divine?

Interpretation

As one observes creation, one necessarily must reason their way from the observations to what conclusions one can draw about God.

The passages above show that we are not only *able* to come to know about God from nature, but what we can know is apparent enough that *none are exempt from the knowledge* creation can bring. (Recall Romans 1:19)

Take an opportunity to interpret from the book of nature that we can know God exists and what we can come to know about him from it.

As an example, consider "the argument from desire" and Acts 17:27. Then, look back at Acts 17:22-23. The argument from desire is very old and very convincing for some (including this author). The argument from desire can be stated as follows:

1. Humans have by nature a desire for the transcendent.
2. Most natural desires are such that there exists some object capable of satisfying them.
3. Therefore, there is probably something transcendent.

The argument considers that the desire is appropriately matched to the existence of the thing that satisfies the desire. Another basic desire would be that of thirst, for which water exists and satisfies it.

Pause and take in the wonder of creation.

Observe the heavens. Observe the stars. Observe your surroundings. Observe people. Take your time and contemplate thoroughly. What does what you observe imply about their origins? What would this indicate about the cause that brought them to be?

Other items to observe could be morality, human conscience, human reason, design etc.

Application

Hopefully the interpretive exercise above helps you realize just how much we can come to know about the reality that God exists, and that he has left his fingerprints all over creation.

See if you can continue to make a concerted effort to see where you can clearly see God's hand in the world around you.

Tuesday

In scripture we come to learn the details about God that cannot be known otherwise. Through scripture we come to know about God's feelings, his desires for us as well as his grand plan for our redemption and restoration to him.

We have very good reason to trust scripture, based on it's internal witness and our understanding of it's origin and faithfulness of transmission. For today, let's look at some Biblical passages about how God reveals himself.

Observation

Read Numbers 12:1-8

What are two ways in which God makes himself known according to this passage?

To whom does God make himself known in the context of Number 12?

Read Ezekiel 35:1-12

Which means of making himself known does God indicate he would use here regarding Edom?

Read Numbers 14:18

This passage makes some very specific claims about the nature of God. What are they?

Interpretation

Read Genesis 15:12-16

In this passage are a couple of threads regarding God's nature and his purposes/promises. What can you deduce from this passage?

How might the Genesis 15 passage affect your understanding of God's commands in Deuteronomy 7:1-26?

Application

Scripture provides insights about God that are well above and beyond our ability to infer from creation. Some of the passages above are challenging, yet they illustrate critical aspects of God's nature such as his justice, faithfulness, patience, and his desire to bless his people.

Make a concerted effort to take note of what we can learn about God while you read scripture. Take care to observe the difference between what you find *described* in scripture and what God *commands*.

With Genesis 15:12-16 as an example think about an occasion where God was faithful in your life, but on a schedule that was decidedly his, not yours.

Focus on trusting God in your situations rather than being anxious over them.

Wednesday

"Afflictions cannot sanctify us, except as they are used by Christ as his mallet and his chisel. Our joys and our efforts cannot make us ready for heaven apart from the hand of Jesus who fashions our hearts aright, and prepares us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

CHARLES SPURGEON

As we learned this past Sunday, God makes himself known to us as he interacts with us. He disciplines us, changes us, cleans us, changes our affinities and blesses us. In each of these ways, and more, we can come to know both his presence and purposes for us.

Observation

Read Ezekiel 36:22-38

Compare Ezekiel 36:25 and Hebrews 10:22. What similarities do you notice between the passages?

Take note of verse 27 and then compare to Romans 8:12-17

Interpretation

Regarding the passage in Romans 8:12-17, what is meant by being "led by the Spirit of God"? Consider also Galatians 5:16-26

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

What can you conclude about God's purposes from this passage?

What do you suppose Paul means by anyone in Christ being a new creation?

Application

Read Ephesians 3:14-21

Consider how you have been strengthened and comforted in the knowledge of the love of Jesus.

Reflect on the idea that as verses 18 and 19 convey that the love of Christ is of such depth that it is unknowable in full.

Thursday & Friday

Due to the amount of reading below, split this across *both* Thursday and Friday.

Exiled to Babylon from Judea in 597 BC, Ezekiel received his call to be a prophet in 593 BC to deliver God's message to the rebellious people of Israel. Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah who like Ezekiel prophesied about the fall of Jerusalem as well as restoration.

We can track the dates of the events in Ezekiel **remarkably** well! *Note: Jehoiachin was king of Judah from 598-597BC and was carried away into exile under Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.*

All of the dates in Ezekiel are in terms of the year of Jehoiachin's exile, with the exception of 1:1, which refers to the year of Ezekiel's life.

Reference	Yr/Mon/Day	Julian calendar	Event
1:1	30/4/5	July 31, 593	Call narrative
1:2	5/4(?)5	July 31, 593	Call narrative
8:1	6/6/5	Sept. 17, 592	Vision of events in Jerusalem
20:1	7/5/10	Aug. 14, 591	Elders come to inquire
24:1	9/10/10	Jan. 15, 588	Siege of Jerusalem begins
26:1	11/-/1	Between Apr. 587 and Apr. 586	Oracle against Tyre
29:1	10/10/12	Jan. 7, 587	Oracle against Egypt
29:17	27/1/1	Apr. 26, 571	Egypt instead of Tyre
30:20	11/1/7	Apr. 29, 587	Oracle against Pharaoh
31:1	11/3/1	June 21, 587	Oracle against Pharaoh
32:1	12/12/1	Mar. 3, 585	Oracle against Pharaoh
32:17	12/-/15	Between Apr., 586 and Apr., 585	Oracle against Egypt
33:21	12/10/5	Jan. 8, 585	Escapee from Jerusalem arrives
40:1	25/1/10	Apr. 28, 573	Vision of restored Jerusalem

The fall of Jerusalem to Babylon paralleled the fall of the northern kingdom to Assyria. If we follow the events above, and recall the upbeat message from Ezekiel 36, we can see both dimensions of the covenant God made with Israel. It is in light of this covenant that we can understand what was transpiring in Ezekiel's day.

In Ezekiel, as well as Jeremiah, we see the announcement of a new covenant that was ultimately revealed in Jesus (Luke 22:20).

Observation

Read Deuteronomy 27-29:1 for some understanding of the nature of the covenant between God and Israel.

The covenant centered principally around the gift of what to the Israelites?

The possession of the land depended upon what?

If the Israelites fulfilled their end of the covenant they would be what?

If the Israelites failed to uphold their end of the covenant they would be what?

Interpretation

Based on what we see about the covenant, how does this inform your understanding of Ezekiel? Read Ezekiel 6:1-10?

The tone of Ezekiel changes after chapter 30. We see in 36:22-23 the prospects of a restoration for Israel. Read 36:26 and consider its relation to Deuteronomy 30:1-3.

Read Jeremiah 29:1-14 / How does this correspond with the covenant and the passages in Ezekiel?

Application

Review the following promises of God and consider to whom they apply. Read more of the text around the verses below to help build enough context to maximize your understanding.

- Genesis 15:5
- Exodus 4:12
- Jeremiah 29:11
- John 16:13
- Matthew 28:20
- Hebrews 13:5

Let an understanding of God's covenant with Israel help guide your understanding as you continue your reading of the Old Testament, and how it helps provide a groundwork for the new covenant revealed in the New Testament.

Make a concerted effort to add as much context as possible to your Bible reading.

Saturday

Journaling

What are some things you have learned about God this week?

What are some things you have learned about yourself this week?

What was the most profound thing you took away from this week from the book of nature?

What steps can you make to improve your awareness and acknowledgement of God in what he is doing in your life?

Rejoice in the work God is doing in your life. Give him thanks.