

Series Title

Sermon Title

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Scripture: Assorted

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

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As my kids continue to get older, I realize that there's a lot I don't know, or at least that's what they tell me, right? I'm not sure what it is about being younger that causes somebody to be curious. But as I have gotten older, I've noticed I don't ask nearly enough questions. Just in the last week, I was asked the following questions by my kids. What is the tallest point in Indiana?

Do you think that there is a spot deeper in the ocean than the Mariana Trench that we just haven't discovered yet? How does pressure underwater push on all sides of an object instead of just from the top? What is the highest point in the continental US? If you are at the ocean anywhere in the world, are you at 0 feet sea level? Is there water in oil? Do giant squids ever come to the surface?

Is it ever hot enough outside to cook an egg in a pan on the sidewalk? Can you turn salt water into fresh water so you can drink it? Is it possible for the world to run out of fresh water? You see, there seems to be an age, I'm not sure what it is, where we stop asking questions. And it's funny how much we think we know until someone comes along, even your kids, and starts asking you questions.

Albert Einstein said, "The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know. The more I learn, the more I realize I don't know." By the way, the answers to the questions are, "Who's your hill?" "No." It's a thing called hydrostatic pressure. Mount Whitney, no, yes, no, yes, yes. It's called desalination and no. All right? So those are the answers, of course, which I had to Google almost all of them because I did not know the answer to those questions.

But I would agree with Albert Einstein in my understanding of Jesus. The more I learn about Jesus, the more I realize I don't know. So today, I want to share with you some things that I am still learning and I still need to learn about Jesus. Because as I go through my life, I have come to the conclusion that he is the example that I want to follow. He is the model after which I want my life to represent.

Whenever I have a question about how I should act or how I should respond to a certain situation, I want to try to look in Scripture to see what Jesus did and respond appropriately. Often, as I look in Scripture, there's not a perfect comparison to the situation that I'm dealing with, but we do our best to determine the truth behind the action and then try to follow that and how we respond. Questions like, "How did Jesus respond to religious people?"

How did Jesus respond to sin? How did Jesus respond to those who were lost? How did he respond to false teachers? How did he respond to things like work and finances and money?" And so today, I just want to take the opportunity to share with you what I have learned about Jesus recently. So let me pray, and then I want to share with you the three things that Jesus has been revealing to me.

Heavenly Father, I thank you that we can never exhaust our knowledge of who you are. The more we learn about you, truly, the more we realize we don't know. I thank you. I thank you that our relationship never gets old. It's never finished. It's never done. It's always progressing.

I thank you for revealing yourself to us in a time frame that we can grasp and we can comprehend. Because I truly believe if you revealed everything about yourself to us at one moment, we wouldn't even survive. So thank you for revealing yourself in a way and in a timeframe that we can grasp.

I pray that we would continue to learn about you, that we would share of who you are with others, that we would grow in our understanding of you. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. The first thing that I'm currently learning about Jesus that I want to share with you was in all of the songs that we sang this morning. And of course, it's something that I have known for a long time, but it seems like God is revealing this about Himself on a new level to me, almost always.

And that's the fact that Jesus is faithful. Jesus is faithful. And when we say that God is faithful, what we are saying is that he can be trusted. He can be trusted. He is going to do what he says he is going to do. It also means that what he is going to do is going to be good in every sense of the Word. What God is going to do. It will be good. It will be right.

It will be perfect. It means that you and I don't need to question his motives or his intentions. We don't need to wonder or fear about the future because God is in control and He is faithful. One quote says this, "God is unchanging in His nature, true to His Word, has promised salvation to His people, and will keep His promises forever.

He is worthy of eternal trust no matter how unlikely his promises seem. He can be trusted." Lamentations chapter 3 verses 22 through 23 says, "Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." Scripture says that God is more faithful than the rising of the sun, more faithful.

Psalms 119, verse 90 says, "Your faithfulness continues through all generations. You established the earth, and it endures. His faithfulness endures through generations. You and I are called simply to be faithful for one lifetime. Imagine being faithful for eternity, never failing. Psalm 36:5 says, "Your love Lord reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." The Psalmist is saying God's faithfulness goes on for eternity.

It goes on forever and ever. Let me share a story with you of just how recently God once again revealed His faithfulness to me and to my wife. Just a few weeks ago, we were celebrating our 20th anniversary. And so we went on a vacation, a trip that we have been saving for, for our 20th anniversary. And so we went to a beautiful location. St. John in the Caribbean is our first time there. And we love hiking. And St.

John is three-quarters of the island is a national forest. And so it's kind of the middle of nowhere. And so we got there that first day, and we decided we slept that night as much as we could because there's no air conditioning, and it was about 95 degrees with a real feel over 100. We got up the next day, and there was a tropical storm that first night we got there and that first morning. And by the time it cleared, we said, "Hey, let's go for a hike." And so we had picked a path that we were going to drive, and we got on the roads, and we got to a certain point where we decided, "You know what?

We probably shouldn't go through these puddles anymore because we didn't know how deep they were." And so we decided to park and just try to find a hike. And so we got to this beautiful beach that was very secluded. And on this beach were all of these rocks. And so we walked all the way to the end of that beach on the rocks where that house is. And we began to walk all the way back. We turned around, and some of the rocks were huge. And so I convinced my wife, "No, let's do this hike." And so we're climbing over all of these rocks, and some of them were very large that we would walk up and scale down.

And we found once we got around one corner, there was another cove, and there was just a little place where there was sand. The whole thing was rocks, but there was one little place, and we had packed peanut butter and jelly for lunch. And so we said, "Hey, let's go to that spot and have a picnic." And so we went to that spot, and I began pulling the food out of my backpack that I had. And I began to panic a little bit because I realized I couldn't find the keys to the Jeep. And we were out in the middle of nowhere.

We would find later that actually with our rented vehicle, we weren't supposed to be on that road after the storm, but we didn't know that. And so I'm looking through my bag and I can't find my keys, and I realized, "Oh, I stuffed them in my pocket." But also in my pocket, I had my sweat rag because it was over 100 degrees, and so I'd constantly wipe my face. And so I pulled out that rag many, many times along this multiple-mile hike to wipe my face. And I realized, "Uh-oh, I'll bet you when I pulled out my rag, one of those 100 times, the keys fell out." And so I began to panic, and I tried to enjoy my peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

And I said, "Okay, honey, I don't know what we're going to do." We had actually rented a vehicle from St. Thomas because there's no airport on St. John. And so the vehicle was rented from an island that was next to us. And so I thought, "Okay, worst-case scenario. We have to call the rental company. They'll send somebody over on a ferry maybe with another key, I hope. I don't know. But it's going to be pretty expensive." And so we're going to look for the keys on the way back. But you saw what the beach looked like. I mean, how are you going to find keys in that? We're climbing all over these rocks.

You know There's a bunch of rocks everywhere that were going over the water and everything else. And so I looked at her and I said, "Honey, there's about a one in a million chance that we're going to find these keys. It's our first day of our vacation." And she says, "Well, let's pray about it." Of course, the pastor should have said that, but she said that. Let's pray about it. I said, "Okay, that's fine." So she prayed, "God, please help us find these keys." And so I'm going to my logical side of my brain. I'm going, "Okay. Every time I pulled out that sweat rag, it probably fell out the first time you know because it just would have fallen out right away, and I probably just didn't realize it.

So I really think it was at that beginning part of the hike where all of those rocks are. So we'll just try to go about a mile and a half to get to that point, and then we'll really start to look. But we'll keep our head down. Of course, there were a million different paths that you could take over the rocks, and I didn't remember which way we went back. So I said, "Honey, I'm sorry. You know I should have put it in the backpack." And so we start walking back. And we get to this one spot where there's water on both sides. I don't know if you can see it.

The waves are splashing up, and there's this one dry spot. And as I look down, my keys are sitting right in that dry spot. And I just happened to look down at that moment because this was not in the place that I thought it was going to be. I know you can't see the keys there, so there's kind of a zoomed-in version. That's not the real keys because we didn't take the actual picture, so I put one on there. But there were the keys sitting there, and so we pick them up, and I instantly am like, "Okay, I truly believe this was a miracle." like I don't even know if that's where my keys fell out of my pocket.

I feel like Jesus picked up the keys and set them right there and said, "Okay, that's where they're going to be." Because they easily could have fallen in the water, and then they wouldn't have worked, even if I did find them. They could have fallen in any crevice of the rock anywhere. They could have been on that part of the beach where everything looked the same size as those keys in the same color, and we never would have found them. And we truly said, "God, thank you for answering our prayers." Even though this was a small thing really in comparison to the rest of the world and what's going on, but for us to take a moment and pray and say, "God, would you please help us find these keys so it doesn't ruin our vacation?" What a first world problem, right?

And God answers that prayer. Jesus is faithful. He is faithful all the time, even in the small things. Another thing that I am reminded of and still learning about Jesus as I read through the New Testament is that Jesus is passionate. Jesus is passionate. Jesus had emotion. He was loving. He had compassion on others.

In Matthew chapter 14, Matthew tells us that when Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Of course, hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. And when Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them, and He healed their sick. Over and over again, we see the compassion of Jesus, that even when He was exhausted, even when He wanted rest, even when He was going through a difficult time, losing his cousin, John, who was beheaded, even as he's trying to get away to get some alone time, He has compassion on the people.

He was passionate for them. Jesus had personality. This is one of the reasons that I love the Chosen series. I fully understand that a lot of it is just in somebody's mind. I get that. But you begin to see Jesus was a real person. He had personality. He had passion in what he said and what he did. Mark tells us in chapter 10 verse 6, "But at the beginning of creation, God made them male and female." That is definitely not the right Scripture reference for sure.

But we know that in Mark, he tells us that the little children came to Jesus. You know They wanted to be around Jesus. The disciples try to get them away. And Jesus says, "No, the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." And just by Mark sharing that with us, I'm reminded, "What child wants to be around someone who isn't fun?" Jesus had to be fun. That's why the kids wanted to be around him. Hebrews chapter 1 verse 9, the author tells us, "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." He was joyful. John chapter 11:35, of course, the shortest verse in Scripture says, "Jesus wept." Jesus had times where he was sad. Mark 3:5, of course, when he cleans the temple, he looked around them in anger and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand," and so he stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

There were times that Jesus was angry. This is another area where I have a lot to learn from Jesus. Both my wife and some of the staff jokingly refer to me as a robot. I tend to take after my dad in this area. I usually just go with the flow. I don't experience high highs and low lows. And so I tend to be fairly even with my emotions, and it can drive people crazy because they just say, "You're just like this all the time.

You never go high, you never go low." Again, just a few weeks ago, we were at a stunning beach on St. John, and Carolyn said, "Isn't this amazing? Isn't it beautiful?" And I looked over at her and said, "Yeah, yeah." Apparently, I didn't have enough enthusiasm. And so the rest of the week, anytime we would go to the beach, I would say, "Wow, this is amazing." It didn't amuse her much. First, let me defend myself just a little bit, all right?

I believe that God intentionally creates people to be different, all right? So there's nothing wrong with this, but it is something I'm working on in learning. There's nothing wrong with some people who are more expressive with all of their emotions and feelings. That's how God has made them. I think about people like Peter in the New Testament. Even as we read stories about him, he was passionate, and so he would say whatever came to his mind, and he was expressive with his emotions. And then there's people that are just more reserved.

I think about other disciples in the New Testament, and there's nothing wrong with that. We can see the personalities of the disciples, and God chose a wide spectrum on purpose. I can tell you that if I did have more high highs and low lows, I may not be here anymore as your pastor. I think it's a gift from God that I'm more even keeled because during COVID, I would have been gone, right? So there is some blessing there.

But like most things, your strengths can also become your weaknesses if you aren't careful. So even though I would say that I'm even keeled helps me with a strength of being a pastor of a church because there's always things that are going on, things that could make your emotions go high, things that could make your emotions go low. So being even keeled has helped me. Over the last few months, God has shown me that I need to be more passionate and I need to show more emotion to those around me so people don't think I'm a robot.

So if I yell at you or give you a huge hug, that's why. All right? I'm trying to show more passion because Jesus was passionate, and there are things that are important that we need to be passionate about. And so I need to express that better. The third thing that I'm learning about Jesus on new levels is that Jesus is full of mercy and grace. Jesus is full of mercy and grace.

I need you to walk with me down this path a little bit. Think back in your life, we have all had someone, whether it's a spouse, a friend, or even an acquaintance, who points out something in your life that either we need to work on, it's a character flaw, or maybe it's something even sinful. And so the person is coming with good

intentions. They are concerned for us. Go back to that moment, if you can. Maybe it was yesterday, maybe it was this morning.

And I want you to remember what was going through your mind. The first thing you will understand or recognize that is true is that we don't take criticism very well, even if it comes from a genuine heart out of concern for us. If you are like most, in that moment, here are some thoughts that went through your mind when somebody was sharing something about you. How dare you bring that up about me? I have 50 examples of how you are worse than me.

And if you're spiritual, you may even throw in some Scripture like, "Why don't you take the plank out of your eye first, buddy?" Right? If it doesn't come out of your mouth, maybe it's in your head. Maybe you think, "Who do you think you are bringing that up? You just don't get it. You're wrong." These are our natural human responses because we feel attacked. We feel insecure. We feel self-righteous. And so we struggle even with constructive criticism.

Now, I want you to imagine being Jesus. I know we can't fully comprehend that, but he knows everything. We've already said this morning that He is faithful. He is all-powerful. He has never sinned or done anything wrong. He lived his life as a servant leader who actually gave his life for those who hated him. He is right in everything he does. He couldn't be more perfect than he already is.

And yet, Jesus must deal daily, hourly, probably every minute or every second with someone who is questioning him, calling him out, or believing that they could be a better God than he is. If I were God, I would imagine the grace and mercy it must take to not just zap that person right on the spot. You think you know better than me? You think you can do a better job?

Do you realize what you've done? Do you want me to pull out the records of things that I have in your life? And you think that you could do better? All of us deserve to be called out sometimes. There's not a single person in here who is perfect, but God never deserves to be called out. Matthew 9:13, "But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." 1 Peter 1:3, Peter says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For in His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's only by His mercy and grace that you and I stand here today." Titus chapter 2:11, "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people." Can you imagine the grace that is necessary so that salvation would be available to every single person, regardless of what they've done?

Isaiah 30:18, "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you. He wants to be gracious. Therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion, for the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him." If God did not exhibit His grace and mercy in our lives, not a single person would be here. We all deserve to be zapped. And yet, you and I are called to show the same grace and mercy.

Amazingly, even while Jesus shows this mercy and grace, He also never gives up on truth. That's the balance that we all struggle with. How do I show mercy and grace to those that are not following God's call while at the same time stand strong to the truth? And so I want to finish by reading a story that we're all familiar with that plays this out in the most amazing way that only Jesus could. A story of grace and truth.

John chapter 8. "But Jesus went on to the Mount of Olives, and at dawn, he appeared again in the temple courts where all the people had gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who was caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women, kill her right there on the spot.

Now, what do you say we should do?" They were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. But instead, Jesus bent down and he started to write on the ground with his finger. And if you are like me, you desperately want to know what he was writing, but we don't know. When they kept on questioning

him, he straightened up and he said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. There is grace.

There is mercy in that." Again, he stooped down and he rode on the ground. "At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there. Are you ready for the truth?" Jesus straightened up and he asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said, "Then neither do I condemn you. Grace and mercy.

Grace and mercy." Jesus declared, "Go now and leave your life of sin. Truth." Isn't that amazing? I read the story and I go, "God, give me that type of wisdom and character so that when I am interacting with people, I can offer that grace. I can offer that mercy while at the same time sharing the truth and that they would experience that." So I close with a question today. What are you learning about Jesus?

What is he teaching you? Do you think that you have learned all there is to know about him? And if not, what are you doing to learn more about him and to grow closer in your relationship with him? I want to encourage you to continue to ask questions. Ask questions. There are no dumb questions. Asking questions is how we learn. Think about when you date someone or when you're meeting someone or becoming friends with someone, how do you get to know them better?

You ask them questions. You ask about them. And so getting to know God better involves asking questions. And I promise, the more you learn about Him, the more you will realize you don't know. The more you learn about Him, the more you will realize you don't know. So what are some ways that you can get to know God better? These are all of the Sunday school answers. You know them. You just have to do them. Read the Bible, read scripture, get to know him. Spend time in prayer.

Join a life group. Do a Bible study. How about spending some time in creation like my wife and I did where you just sit there and listen. And you look at the beauty around you of even a fallen world. You need to understand that when we look around us and we see the beauty of creation and we see the order that God has put together, all of this is tainted by sin, and yet we still think it's beautiful. How awesome is heaven going to be where there is no sin and it's not been tainted?

If we can see beauty here in this world, I can't imagine what heaven's going to be like. Maybe being more attentive throughout your day for God's blessings, God's gifts. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you in new ways. Ask Him. Say, "God, I want to know more about you." And sometimes the best way we can learn more about God is going through a difficult time, and you don't have to make those up. They'll come, all right? Just be present when they come.

You see, relationships don't happen by accident. You must be intentional. You are not going to accidentally grow in your relationship with God. You're going to have to choose something and say, "I want to grow." And work on that. Again, reading Scripture, prayer, all these different ways. Just choose one and say, "God, I would like you to reveal yourself to me more so I can learn more about you." Let me close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank You today for Your faithfulness to us. We thank You that You are passionate. You show emotion. You have compassion for us. You care about us like a Father cares for His children.

We thank You for Your grace and Your mercy in our lives that allows us to take every breath. For without Your grace and Your mercy, not a single person would be here. May You continue to reveal Yourself to us in ways that draw us closer to You. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.