

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

April 16, 2023 Elemental: Earth.

I Intro.

Happy Sunday after Easter. Welcome to our devotional. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Sunday.

Okay, let's get this on the table right off the bat. The title for this new series feels very woo-woo. And we own that. The title: "**Elemental**" just feels a little...not very scriptural. But, hear us out. As much as we know about God. Have dedicated our lives to him. Seek to know God more deeply, serve him, share our relationship with others. Sometimes God just feels really far away. We may be going through a difficult time. We aren't getting answers to some of our questions. There are things happening in our lives that just don't fit how we understand God or scripture. And we need something substantial and real that gives us a solid place to hold onto in that tough place.

That's the purpose of this series: "**Elemental**". To know God understood and knew we would be in these tough places. So, he gave us pieces of himself in everyday ordinary things to help us find him when we were in those tough places. And today...Earth. God all around us. So, let's go there.

What places outside of a planned worship service do you experience God?

What do you know or feel in these places?

How do you know it's God?

The scripture we used was **Romans 1:18-23**. Read this, and we'll start as we normally do.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

How did you deal with the felt harshness at the beginning?

What did you pull from it about finding and experiencing God?

We'll dig into the passage and pull out some truths about finding God in everything we experience around us.

1. We can't hide from God's reaction to our inability to see what he has so generously and graciously shared with us. That's a lot. First, we often see the word; "*wrath*" in other translations. But the Greek word really means- swelling or to inherently oppose. This isn't God throwing lightning bolts at us. Or we owe God, and he needs our adoration. This is us missing out, 'built into nature', all he wants to give us, and God feeling the pain of our rejection. These are natural consequences to how God made the world. This teaching **MUST** speak to us, and not be used as a club to beat up other people. **When does God feel far away...for you?**

When are YOU struggling to trust in, and experience God? This passage is a promise to you that no matter what you're going through, God is here, there, everywhere, AND can be found. Use this truth to invite them to walk with you to find God.

2. God has made it as easy as possible for us to connect with him. To see and know him.

God is saying; *"I'm right in front of you"*. Everywhere you go, you will find me if you look for me. When we play hide and seek with little kids, we always pick an easy place, and they still can't find us. Just like children we're often bad at seeing sometimes. This isn't proving there's a God. That's a fool's game. I 'believe' there is a God. But not because someone gave me a set of facts that I couldn't refute. Arguments rarely win people over to God. And not because the bible says there's a God. That's how I learn more about God, and grow closer to him. I believe there is a God because I see his hand everywhere, and I have experienced him personally. I have personally had an encounter with something that I can't explain any other way but believing it's God. I believe that God is alive, everywhere, in everything, and wants a personal relationship with him personally. This is about finding God when you need him.

3. Real idolatry is being distracted by things that bring temporary happiness. Can't use this as a clobber passage at others either. We are to let scripture speak into our lives, shine light in the closets we lock, and find our complicitness in missing God. Then we can walk with others, helping them see where they might be trying to find comfort, security, meaning, from things other than God. So...

Where do you trust, look towards things that don't bring the security, assurance, comfort you're looking for?

What earthly things have you lifted to be more important than God?

Anyone else putting their trust in that or something that isn't God, and can't bear the weight of our expectations?

4. Key is to remember the mystery of God. Not the certainty, or all the answers of God. But that what we see, feel, experience all around you points us to God. We will never find answers to all of our questions about God. There will be so much we will never know, understand, fathom, about all of who God is. You get to work that out over your life. We trust in God understanding the mystery also.

III Challenge.

We don't usually include scripture in the final part of our devotion. But we want to in this one. Read **Luke 19:39-40. What do you take from Jesus' statement that if you try to silence the voices who proclaim even the Earth will cry out?**

Now read **Job 12:7-10. What do you believe God was telling Job in Job trying to figure out who God is, and why all the bad stuff was happening?**

There will be times, seasons, in your life in which God will feel very far away. You won't be able to feel him, sense him, and he will seem silent. And there are those times that God might be silent. We see examples of that all through scripture. However, we know and can trust, God has not abandoned us. He is still everywhere...all around us. We just have to find those things that can hold us in place.

So, What can you look towards, seek, hold onto, that will give you assurance that God is for you?