

Pastor Kevin Garman

Theme: Moved by the Spirit

Scripture: Matthew 22:34-40

August 8th, 2021

Summer Reflections: I'm just "Blowin' in the Wind"

In last week's summer reflection, we discussed perseverance and peace as I shared with you my journey to Bozeman, MT at the start of my vacation in July. We looked to the church of Ephesus for our reflection on peace as a way to come together in the love of the gospel. This week we focus on the theme engaging with the holy spirit and how we respond to the Spirit in our walk of faith. I felt like I gave two separate sermons last week trying to connect everything to scripture, so this week, we will use the song by Bob Dylan, "Blowin' in the Wind," to conclude our message to hear the Word in a different manner. Lastly, the question we wrestle with is, what does it mean to be human and experience life as a human being?

In our last story, I ended up in Missoula, MT due to the lack of camping in the Bozeman region. After the long, two-hundred and two miles from Bozeman to Missoula, I finally made it to my new destination. The entire ride there I pondered on, "Why is Missoula all the sudden this newfound destination? What's waiting for me there? What new adventure will I experience?"

The drive into Missoula was something I will never forget. I'm not sure if it was as magical as I interpreted it to be, but the hues of orange, pink, and red from the sunset draped across Missoula's rolling landscape and seemed as if I was in a scene from some old Western film. I was in love and Western Montana had stolen my heart. As I drove throughout the city, I passed by the Van Buren Footbridge overlooking the Clark Fork River. I went back in time as I approached the Milwaukee Train Depot feeling as if I was a traveler at the turn of the century witnessing Montana in her infancy as she grew and developed her new, modern identity. I saw the magnificent tower at University Hall at the University of Montana soaring over the campus. Missoula is where the winds had blown me, but my adventurous Spirit's thirst had not yet been quenched.

I stopped for dinner that evening (I'm not even sure where at this point, all that mattered was I had food) and began searching for interesting sites to visit and free camping in the area. When all the sudden, the proverbial lightbulb illuminated above my head as I realized, "I am only 3 hours away from Spokane (SpO-Can that's really important) and I have always wanted to visit Washington state" It was only 6:30 in the evening. I would easily make it in time for a

reasonable check in time at a hotel and I was able to find a room that didn't cost \$300 for the night. I had made up my mind. This was no longer a Montana road trip, but it was now my initial tour of the Northwest. So I threw away my napkins and disposable cup filled with whatever sugary drink I didn't need and began en route to Spokane!

Washington gave me quite the introduction. Since I pulled into Spokane at nearly 10:00 p.m. that night, I went straight to the hotel and went to bed. However, my morning was much more eventful. Being from Appalachia, I miss the green grass and plethora of trees at every corner and bend, and Washington surely filled my soul that morning with its beautiful display of greenery. It wasn't just the greens on display that morning, but it was an impressive sight to witness as the purple sages, the black cottonwoods, douglas fir pines, blue elderberries, and Rocky Mountain junipers **change this** were a sight to behold. I meandered about through Riverfront Park soaking in the richness Washington had to offer that morning. I was right where I needed to be. That's a wonderful feeling, knowing you are exactly where you are meant to be in your journey through time and space is perfect where you are. Right then and right there. My adventures were not over for the day. In fact, my wild day had just begun.

Next on the agenda was another city I had to learn how to properly pronounce (I will probably still butcher the name) as I visited Lake Coeur d'Alene. For those of you who were able to tune into Jake's final Musical Musing, I used some stock footage from my videos of Lake Coeur D'Alene. There was a quaint, short trail tucked away just behind one of the bends of the lake, so I hiked to the summit and was able to take in a different view of Lake Coeur D'Alene. However, the lake wasn't the only place I stopped in Idaho. I learned about the fires of 1910 which changed this section of the Rocky Mountains forever. I learned about the heroism of the firefighters who died fighting this fire, many whose names are unknown due to them moving from various regions of Eastern and Central Europe for a new life and new opportunities. I passed by the self-sufficient mountain towns of Wallace and Kellogg. Even though it was a small sliver of Idaho in which I was able to experience, it was painstakingly obvious that the Gem state is not only called the Gem state because of its natural mineral and gem deposits, but it is the Gem state because it is extraordinarily astonishing. After passing through Idaho, I had made my way back to Montana, but this adventure was far from over.

I made a deal with myself the day before as I set off for Spokane. The deal was this: You are no longer on a vacation that is planned and directed for every hour and every minute like the one you had previously planned. Since you have no destination, you should take whatever side quest or off road adventure Glenda can

handle or you desire (*Glenda* is my car's name, just for context). Just as I was recollecting this deal I made with myself, a sign for a ghost town called *Garnet, MT* appears just to my right. I take the next exit to the right and after 11 miles of a winding, gravel road, I make it to the ghost town of *Garnet*.

Garnet was interesting because it was as if time had stopped in this dozen acre wood. On the east side of the country, we certainly have old ghost towns too, but there is something unique about the ghost towns here in the west. Maybe it's because we romanticized the vast, seemingly endless space the west has to offer or maybe it is because we live in a modern age where every five years seem to be a monumental change in our society, but regardless of the reasons, *Garnet* was stuck at the turn of the 20th century. I was intrigued by the stories and lifestyles these folks must have had to endure the winters and harsh climate here without our modern day luxuries and accommodations.

Leaving *Garnet*, I took a single lane mountain pass back down the mountain, which I can only describe to you as a natural, God-made rollercoaster spiraling down the mountainside. I was fairly certain at some points as I looked over the edge of the cliff with no rail and my tires sliding on the gravel that I was going to meet my maker that afternoon as a white-knuckled left hand clenched the steering wheel and the other white-knuckled clenched my emergency brake. I was screaming in joy and terror and I made my descent. That evening I treated myself to as much of an Old Chicago pizza that I could shove into my face in one sitting and a tasty, Montanan craft beer to wash it all down with. I was in full vacation mode and loving every minute of it.

I obviously survived God's *Garnet Mountain* adventure and because of this victorious endeavor, I had mustered up the courage and fortitude to finally search for a camping spot. I was going to go camping on this trip regardless of where I camped. My gear was in the back and I was determined to find this magical campground that I had been searching for the past few days, but I was going to find it, no matter the cost. Next week's adventures do not include a harrowing mountainside experience, but it does involve escaping the clutches of a killer Grizzly in Eastern Missoula, a lot more tedious driving throughout Central Montana, and another awestruck moment as I stood on the banks of the Missouri River.

Throughout my trip, I asked a few questions during the entirety of this trip. "Why am I lucky enough to experience this peace and tranquility? Why am I blessed and privileged enough to place my feet in this lake, on this mountain, and experience all this breathtaking beauty? What does it mean to be human and what does it mean to exist? A course from my final year at Iliff was titled, "Being Human in the Modern World" and these were many of the similar questions and

reflections we discussed in that course. Each of these questions are unanswerable questions and they are questions which have led great thinkers, philosophers, and religious leaders alike to start movements all across our world to help us reflect on this question in life.

Although I have a deep appreciation for science, and personally, I feel as if science and religion ask similar questions even though they seek different answers, science cannot provide an adequate response to this question. Science can tell us what constitutes a human by a physiological definition and understanding of our genetic makeup. Various forms of science can even help us pinpoint the origins of humanity and life across the universe. Science can help us understand how the world around us operates, but it doesn't answer the question, why? Why does this all exist? Why am I here and now and not in some futuristic version of us living on Mars or wrapped in the story of some ancient dynasty of old? Why was I born in this time and this age and what am I supposed to do with this time I am given?

Let's not kid ourselves, religion, our cultures and traditions, although they do as good of a job as they can to help us understand our world, even religions across the world, including Christianity, do not have all the answers to life. We can pretend we do and we can lie to people that we have all the answers, but the truth is the truth, we are all simply figuring out the answers to this question. What does it mean to be human? My short answer is all humans have a space in creation and all creation, or anything constituted as living, has a space and place in the universe and in time. Just as I witnessed the expansive expression of creation all throughout my travels, I think the answer to this question requires a depth of wisdom and understanding that all of creation experiences and sees the world from a different perspective.

In short, there is no clear cut definition of understanding this question. Jesus wrestled with this question throughout his ministry, and the disciples and Paul would engage with this question as they built the foundations of the early church. In my opinion, this is the question Jesus is attempting to answer when he gives us the *Greatest Commandment*. Think of the *Greatest Commandment* in this way, "Love yourself with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, not because you are God yourself, but you are a beautiful child of God. When you learn to love yourself in a healthy way and in a constant manner, go out into the world and teach others to love themselves. Because love is contagious, infectious, transformative, and you will change the lives of those around you when you spread this type of love and let that type of love foster and grow into something even you cannot see." Does this not sound similar to the *Greatest Commandment*? Is this not at least one

of the better views we could hold and seek out in a world so divided by war, hatred, and terror?

We will continue to engage with this question of what does it mean to be human next week as we look to more adventures throughout my month in July for our summer reflections. Let us end today's message by speaking in a different way. This song was originally used to protest the cruelty and senseless nature of the Vietnam War. Bob Dylan said this about the song, "There ain't too much I can say about this song except that the answer is blowing in the wind. It ain't in no book or movie or TV show or discussion group. Man, it's in the wind — and it's blowing in the wind. Too many of these hip people are telling me where the answer is but oh I won't believe that. I still say it's in the wind and just like a restless piece of paper it's got to come down some ... But the only trouble is that no one picks up the answer when it comes down so not too many people get to see and know ... and then it flies away. I still say that some of the biggest criminals are those that turn their heads away when they see wrong and know it's wrong. I'm only 21 years old and I know that there's been too many wars ... You people over 21, you're older and smarter (Gray (2006). The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia. p. 64). The message is only Blowin' in the Wind as the Holy Spirit moves us and shapes us to new beginnings and new horizons. Amen.