

“New Attitudes for the New Year”

Be Awestruck

Psalm 8:1-4

Jan. 17th, 2021

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When you look at this picture of a kitten, what word or phrase comes to mind?



I’m gonna take a guess and say the word or phrase you might have said was something like, “Awe – how cute!” No doubt, this little kitty is very cute! Look at those eyes! Look at those ears and those paws? Doesn’t this picture, make you say: “awe?”

Now, it could have easily been a picture of a puppy, but there are certain kind of things that make us say: “awe.”

Here’s another picture I’d like to show you, and again, when you look at this picture, what word or expression comes to mind?



This is a picture of the Grand Canyon, and perhaps you might have said to yourself something like, “Wow!” “Amazing” or “breath taking!”

I could probably show you more pictures, but I'll get to the point. What I was trying to do was to find out, "*What makes you say 'awe?'*"

What is it that fills your mind with wonder?
What is it that takes your breath away?
What is it that makes your jaw drop or blows your mind away?

About our sermon series on "attitudes."

Last Sunday we began a new sermon series: "*New Attitudes for the New Year.*" and we spent some time looking at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

We didn't look at the entire sermon - just the opening few verses where Jesus talked about what it meant to be "blessed" in a section called: "the Beatitudes."

Then I explained why they were called the "beatitudes" - it has to do with the Latin translation, but a more fun explanation was that the beatitudes were the "attitudes" that God wants us to "Be." The "Be-Attitudes" And so that's what this series is about - it's about "Attitudes."

What is Attitude?

I think you all know what attitude is. It's the way we think or feel about something or someone, it's also – our disposition & our perceptions and the way we communicate, how we feel about certain things.

I'm sure you've met people who have really great attitudes right? And I'm sure you've also met people who have really terrible attitudes. (You never forget them.)

Charles Swindoll said: "*I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.*" He's talking about Attitude.

I've met people who have experienced some of the most terrible things, and yet, what I will remember about them is the positive attitude they displayed. ("*What doesn't kill me – makes me stronger!*")

Likewise, I'm sure there are people who experienced something great, and yet, what we remember about them is the negative attitude they displayed. ("*Daddy, I didn't want a Red Ferrari, I wanted a Black Porsche!!*")

The attitudes we have and the attitudes we show to others says a lot about ourselves.

For example, you might be a person who complains that roses have thorns, or you might be a person who rejoices that thorns have roses. It's all a matter of Attitude!

Be-Awestruck.

Well, going along with the "BE-attitudes," here's the attitude that I'm focusing on this morning - I want all of us to be in awe of God. Or if I can say it another way, be awestruck. Be in awe of God! Be filled with the wonders of God! Be amazed! Be blown away! Be mesmerized!

Can I read a few quotes to you?

"AWE is an impressionable moment attributed to God because of the undeniable display of His active presence. When God's magnificence, glory and power, grabs our soul's attention, it prompts the realization of God in it or God with us. Awe is a step beyond thankfulness. It's a declaration, a confession." (Teri Hutchinson)

In a book written by Brennan Manning called "Abba's Child" he writes:

"When God come streaming into our lives in the power of his word, all he asks is that we be stunned and surprised, let our mouths hang open and begin to breathe deeply."

Someone else said:

"The Awe of God expresses our love for God."

And so that is the attitude that I want for all of us - to be – in Awe of God! To be – Awestruck!

Researchers at U.C. Berkeley did an interesting study on the topic of awe and wonder. (UC Berkeley folks! So we know it's legit.)

They did a study on awe and wonder and our sense of well being and the way we relate to others. Their study found that *"experiencing wonder- lifts our mood, helps us heal from pain and grief and also pushes us towards acts of kindness."*

They also revealed that *"the experience of being moved by something bigger than ourselves, whether it be the natural world, in art or religion, intrinsically re-positions us to respond to the world with acts of compassion."*

That is my hope for all of us this morning - to rediscover how to be in Awe of God
– to be Awestruck!

Psalm 8:1-4

Our 1st passage for today is connected to my 1st encouragement and that is to be in AWE ~ of what God has done. **To be awestruck by God's creation.**

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise, because of your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what [are we] that you are mindful of us, [humanity] that you care for us?

Psalm 8 is attributed to David from the Old Testament.

Before David became the king, before David sat on the throne, before he lived in a palace made of stones and surrounded by guards, David was a shepherd.

which means that David spent a lot of time watching over his flock and during the day, he would protect them from wild animals, but during the night there wasn't much to do, except to find a place to sit or lay down and then I imagine David looked up at the stars.

"[When] I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous, your handmade sky-jewelry, moon & stars mounted in their settings, then I look at my micro-self and wonder why do you bother with us? Why take a second look our way?"

[the MSG translation.]

I imagine what David saw filled his mind and spirit with an everlasting awe of God!

Not too long ago I had the chance to visit the California Academy of Science up in San Francisco, and if you've ever been there they have a Planetarium inside where they do a presentation called "Passport to the Universe."

I didn't know what to expect but as soon as they projected images onto the ceiling above you, it was as if you were flying through the universe millions & millions of light years away!

Then they showed images taken from the Hubble Space Telescope and when it was finally over, I walked out of the Planetarium speechless and unable to describe what I just experienced.

What I can tell you is that I felt infinitesimally small and that the universe was infinitesimally ginormous! Then my thoughts turned to God and how awesome and how marvelous was the work of his fingers!

David was awestruck by what he saw up in the night sky!

I don't know how many of you are on Facebook, but if you are, do yourself a favor and becomes friends with Janey Walser.

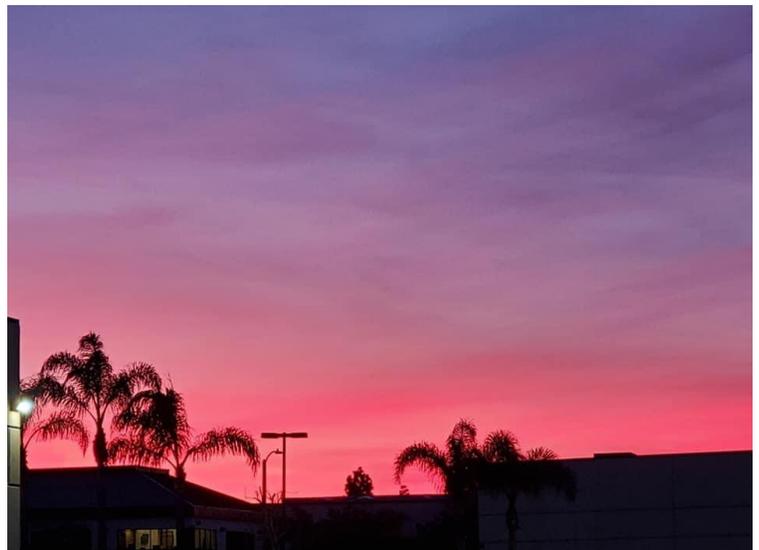
Why? Well, Janey posts a lot of pictures and on a regular basis, she posts pix of sunrises and sunsets.



Here's a pix she took one morning of a sunrise right outside her home.

Here's another pix she took one afternoon of a sunset from her store.

Janey didn't take these pictures, from the top of Mt. Everest or from a sandy beach in Hawaii She also didn't take these pictures using a \$5000 camera, just her smart phone and she posts these kinds of pictures, all the time!



Wanna be Awestruck by God? Start by looking up in the sky because God's been trying to get your attention every single morning and every single evening!

For some people, when they consider what God has made it is easy to stand in awe. A sunrise. A sunset. A snowcapped mountain or the waves of the ocean. A rainbow, a rainstorm, the sound of a child's voice. All of these things can instill the amazing awe of God.

How many of you remember the very 1st time you went to a Zoo? It's probably been a while. Maybe you remember the 1st time taking your kids or the 1st time taking your grandkids - seeing in real life and up close for the very first time, something like a giraffe and it's long slender neck reaching up to the sky?

Or seeing something like an elephant - bigger than an SUV - it's massive body!
Or how about a lion or a tiger their ferocious looking teeth and the sound of their majestic roar!

Or maybe it was something more delicate like a peacock and seeing it open up its plumage and all the colors shimmering before you and when you looked at your child's face, taking in this amazing splendor for the very 1st time and seeing those images, being downloaded into their memories for the rest of their lives - their eyes wide open their mouths agape - there were no words coming out because this was a sensory overload. To go to a zoo for the very 1st time is something for a child to behold!

The very first human being, Adam, never went to a zoo, but there's a very beautiful passage (starting in Gen. 2:19)

"Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man [Adam] to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field."

It was as if God brought Adam to the zoo. (Or more accurately, God brought the zoo to Adam!) And as each animal was presented and Adam saw each animal for the very first time, whatever sound he made, whatever sound came out of mouth, God took note and said: *"That's what we're going to call it!"*

For some people like little children, and for others who have a child-like wonder, it is easy to stand in awe by the things that God has made.

My second encouragement today is to be in Awe of who God is. Be Awestruck simply by God's character.

There are so many different attributes that we can say about God. That alone could be an entire sermon series. *God is love; God is patient; God is generous; God is forgiving.*

But the one attribute that always instills a sense of wonder and instills a sense of awe, is God's faithfulness and how God never gave up on us. God never called it quits. God never gave up on humanity.

There was a time a long time ago - it was a few generations after Adam/Eve, when the whole of humanity had become an eyesore to God. It was at that moment that God was grieved about us, that God could have easily pressed the "reset" button and started completely all over and thrown out the first batch, but then God gave us a second chance starting with a man named Noah.

I don't know if you've heard this phrase - it's the phrase "Cancel Culture." It's kind of a new phrase that started not long ago, where if someone does something wrong, we just "cancel them."

For example, if a celebrity says the wrong thing, or an athlete does something wrong in public, (and not just famous people but everyday people), if they do something that goes against popular opinion than society "cancels" them and unfriends them and unfollows them, pretty much just boycotting them all together. That's cancel culture and you're seeing it happen all over the place.

But God did not "cancel" his contract with humanity. God didn't "unfriend us." God didn't "unfollow us" in fact God did the very opposite - He doubled-down in the person of Jesus Christ. (That is amazing!)

Even on a personal level, God does not "cancel" on us.

There was this time when Jesus popularity was riding high. Everyone thought that Jesus was going to change the world quite literally. They thought that He was going to take back the nation; they thought that He would restore the sovereignty of Israel, but when it turned out that Jesus was following different orders people started to "cancel" on Him. Most notably, the #1 disciple Peter.

Peter denied knowing Jesus (or in today's terms - Peter "unfriend" and "unfollowed" Jesus,) as if Peter was saying: "I don't know that Guy." Well, a few days later after the resurrection, it turned out that Jesus DID change the world by dying on a cross and forgiving the world of sin.

But instead of looking for new disciples and starting with a brand new team, Jesus decided to restore Peter and restore their relationship and gave Peter, a 2nd chance.

God does not give up on us. Jesus does not cancel on us. Despite all our failures, despite all our mistakes, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Savior and our Lord has never deserted us. That alone should awaken a sense of awe in every single one of us.

Finally, be in awe of the Word of God.

Be awestruck by what God has said. Sometimes God grabs your attention with signs and wonders. Sometimes God gets your attention with sunrises & sunsets. With miracles, with burning bushes and with parting seas, but then other times it is the "still small voice" of God that leaves you in a sense of awe.

That was the case for Elijah.

Elijah was looking for a sign from God and so Elijah climbed up to the top of a mountain hoping for a sign,

"And behold, the Lord passed by and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord."

So reads 1 Kings 19:11.

That would have been enough for me to be in awe of God, but then Elijah said
"But the Lord was not in the wind."

Then after the wind there was an earthquake, which always puts the fear of the Lord in me, but then Elijah said:

"But the Lord was not in the earthquake."

Then after the earthquake there was fire,
"But the Lord was not in the fire."

and after the fire, finally came
a *“still small voice.”*

It wasn't in the wind. It wasn't in the earthquake nor was it in the fire, but in a still small voice that God wanted to grab Elijah's attention and that's how he knew God was finally speaking to him.

Being in awe of God sometimes means paying attention to the not-so obvious things, the not-so loud things, but the quiet whispers of the Holy Spirit.

If you want to be in awe of God it helps to start listening.

When we get to the New Testament, God made it easier to hear His voice because when Jesus spoke - people heard the voice of God.

In one particular passage Matt. 7, it said:

“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were AMAZED at his teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

People were “amazed” at Jesus' teachings - they were in awe of His words. In fact, there are 36 diff references where people were “amazed” at the words that Jesus spoke.

Did you know that Jesus never wrote a book? Jesus told a lot of stories and parables. He also preached a few sermons, but Jesus never wrote a book.

Jesus also never received a diploma. He didn't have a bachelors, a masters or a Ph.D. He never spoke at a college graduation. He never addressed members of congress. But for someone who by today's standards didn't have academic credentials, Jesus hands down is the most quoted person of all time.

Someone once said:

“Jesus never wrote a book, and yet perhaps all the libraries in the world could not hold the books that have been written about Him.”

“Jesus never wrote a song, and yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the song writers combined.”

“Jesus never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students.”

Now you know why people were amazed and in awe by the things He said.

Jesus spoke to the wealthy as well as those who had nothing.
He spoke to the established as well as to the disenfranchised.
He spoke to those who had power as well as to those who had none,
He spoke to old wise learned men as well as little children who were eager to sit on His lap.

Jesus spoke words that disarmed an angry mob of men.
Jesus spoke words that turned “accusers” into the accused.
He spoke words to a sinner that spoke of “second chances”
and to those who at the end of their rope He told them to start over.

Jesus talked about fishing. He talked about farming.
He talked about medicine. He talked about money.
He talked about “wayward sons” He talked about “missing sheep.”
He talked about the Golden Rule. He talked about attitudes.

Most of all, Jesus talked about an extraordinary God and the Kingdom of Heaven,
in such a way that the ordinary people like you and me could finally understand.

And the people were in awe and amazed.

Be in awe of God this week. Be awestruck!
Stand in awe of God this week by what you see and by what you know about God!