

# Welcome

Introduce [[Cooking with Catalyst: Chicken Tikka cooking video](#)]

When we choose to be curious, we choose a life that's open to mystery. A life of surprise and delight. Here at Catalyst, we value curiosity as an invitation to discover the mystery of God's love for us again and again and again!

# Message

Believe it or not, Advent starts next week! Traditionally, here at Catalyst we've used the four weeks leading to Advent to revisit our core values. A few years ago, our Leadership Team brought new core values to the congregation that we believe better specify who we are and what we're about as a congregation.

They were: Friendship, Diversity, Discipleship and Pilgrim. Over the last couple of years, we've been playing with the wording - especially the last two, since they're still really insider-church language.

So this year, we're going to reintroduce them as: Friendship, Diversity, Transformation and Curiosity. We believe these four words embody who God calls us to be as a congregation and help us look ahead to next year.

We've explored how Friendship is the heart of Jesus' good news, that it was around a table that Jesus declared us his friends. We continued around a table, exploring Diversity as prioritizing those who are overlooked and excluded. Last week, we looked at Transformation as a 'low and slow' process of trusting the Spirit to make us new.

Today, we arrive at our final core value, Curiosity. We originally called this value 'Pilgrim', but it never set well with us. When we hear the word 'Pilgrim', we think of the Mayflower folks with shiny buckles on their hats. There's a lot of colonialism and American history wrapped up in that word - baggage that is at best a distraction from what we actually value. At worst, it conjures the violence and brutality of colonialism our church actively opposes.

I was talking with pastor Sonya about this (she said, "literally any word is better than 'pilgrim'). The word 'pilgrim' originally meant a person who leaves where they are to encounter God somewhere else. It's about the idea that I/we don't have a monopoly on God, that God is always bigger than whatever box we create for God. And the best way to experience that is to leave.

That's why we call our Mexico trips 'pilgrimages'. We're not going to save. We're going to encounter.

So anyway, Sonya and I were talking about this core value and what's behind it. What's at the root of this idea that God is bigger than our boxes? What's at the root of this idea that there are ways we can only know God better when we step outside our comfort zones?

And the idea we landed on was *curiosity*.

Make a list of words associated with churches and surely *curiosity* isn't one of them. After all, churches are known for telling people *not* to be curious. Just to believe what the sage on the stage says.

Christians are often perceived as the least curious people around. And that's a shame, because here at Catalyst, we believe curiosity is an essential virtue for a vibrant spirituality - and we're not just making that up.

Turn with us to [Exodus 3](#).

This story takes place early in the story of God's people. They're enslaved in Egypt, and God is about to set out on a mission of liberation that will upend the whole world. God's chosen champion is a guy named Moses. Moses is a Hebrew by nature and an Egyptian by nurture. He was born to a Hebrew mother but raised by one of Pharaoh's daughters.

Moses is living in a self-imposed Exile because he murdered an Egyptian who was beating one of his fellow Hebrews. He's fled to the back country, the desert. He met a country girl, fell in love and got married. Now he works for his father-in-law as a shepherd.

Not exactly choice labor for a guy who grew up in a palace.

[Exodus 3](#) is the story of how God recruited Moses, and I want to invite you to consider the role curiosity plays in that recruitment. Let's read:

One day Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian. He led the flock far into the wilderness and came to Sinai, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush. Moses stared in amazement. Though the bush was engulfed in flames, it didn't burn up. "This is amazing," Moses said to himself. "Why isn't that bush burning up? I must go see it." -- Exodus 3:1-3 (NLT)

Moses is *curious*. Almost despite himself. I wonder if our familiarity with this story makes it hard for us to feel the strangeness of this moment. But a lot of y'all know I love horror movies. One of the fun things about horror films is seeing them in a full theater. Because there's always a moment when the main character does something stupid - goes into the basement, answers the phone, goes outside to check out that weird thing.

And you can hear the whole audience going, “NO NO NO NO NO WHAT ARE YOU DOING STOP IT!”

I can't help but wonder if that's what we *should* be feeling about this moment. After all, the Bible tells us that this bush is burning without being consumed. And that it's because a messenger from God is standing in the midst of it. 10/10 times God's messengers show up in the Bible, people's response is to fall down in fear.

But Moses is like that character in the monster movie. He is *curious*. He says, “Wow, that looks interesting” - which is a way of saying, “This is outside my experience.”

So Moses goes to investigate and get swept up into what God is doing.

Because he was curious. Because he said, “Maybe I'll make a detour and check this out,” God used him to topple an Empire and liberate his oppressed people.

Amazing what a little curiosity can do, isn't it?

## Song

Would you believe me if I told you that curiosity is core to Jesus' ministry as well?

Turn with us to Luke 19.

Several times over the last year, we've explored the story of Zacchaeus, the short tax collector whose life was transformed by an encounter with Jesus. I want to return to his story again today, and compare his encounter with Jesus to that burning bush.

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” -- Luke 19:1–5 (NLT)

He was so anxious to see Jesus that he climbed a tree! He was willing to take a risk on this rabbi who was known for being a friend of outcasts and sinners like him - and it changed him. He was willing to give up everything (he gives away most of everything he has voluntarily - without Jesus asking for anything!).

Friends, I know that most of our churches are not places that welcome the sort of curiosity Zacchaeus demonstrates. Because the truth is that curiosity is often a threat to the status quo. Curiosity is the question, “Why is this the way it is?” (Which, in Zacchaeus’ story is true - people were absolutely scandalized that such a scoundrel like he could find favor in Jesus’ eyes.)

Here at Catalyst, we love asking questions. We love getting to know people who don’t look like us, who don’t see the world the way we do, people who are different.

And we’re not afraid of unknowns or mysteries. We trust that Jesus is the Truth, and that all of our inquiries will end in him.

That’s why we can explore. That’s why we can be generous and open-handed. We are a church that wants to spot all the mysteries. We want to be a church that suspects *every* bush might be burning if only we’ll look closely enough.

## Communion + Examen

Jesus invites us: Come and see!

When in the last month have I been curious?

When in the last month have I been threatened by curiosity?

How in this next season can I be open and curious?

## Assignment + Blessing

Ask some good questions!