

Welcome

One of the greatest movies of all time turns 30 this year: Stephen Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*. I remember reading Michael Crichton's book when I was in sixth grade - a lot went way over my head. But I wanted to be ready that summer when I got to experience it on the big screen.

Do you remember that scene when Dr. Hammon is taking his guests through the park? They're all in jeeps, and Dr. Sattler finds a prehistoric plant that's somehow alive. She's exclaiming at how impossible it is when Dr. Grant stands up, his eyes bulging as they catch something in the distance. He grabs Dr. Sattler's head and turns it and she sees -

A real, living brachiosaurus.

Hammond sees their expressions and says, "Dr. Grant, my dear Dr. Sattler, WELCOME! To.... Jurassic Park!" and then that iconic John Williams score swells as the camera pans to a whole valley full of dinosaurs.

I mean seriously... in the 30 years since, it remains one of my top five cinematic experiences ever.

Which is pretty strange because I grew up in a church that was anti-science. That same year, our church brought in a speaker from a young earth creationist group to explain to us how scientists like those who consulted with Crichton and Spielberg on *Jurassic Park* were part of a global conspiracy to turn us all into atheists by teaching us that the Bible is false because the Earth is actually 4 billion years old.

Even at that early age, I felt that strange tension the Church has wrestled with at least since the dawn of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution.

It's sad because I actually think *Jurassic Park* has a really important message that should have resonated with the Church. (Okay it actually has a lot - we could talk about the sense of awe in the face of creation that scene I just described evokes.)

It's from a later scene when Hammond and Malcom are debating the ethics of bringing dinosaurs back to life. You know the scene (it's become one of the more famous memes):

Malcolm says, "Your scientists were so busy asking whether they *could*, they never stopped to consider whether they *should*."

Malcolm points at a curious limitation of science: it's amoral. Not evil... that's *immoral*. But non-moral. Science isn't good or evil. It's a tool. What matters is who's *using* the tool. And Malcolm's

concern - which of course turns out to be correct - is that the Jurassic Park scientists don't have any humility before the awesome feat they're attempting.

The truth is, a good scientist doesn't have to reject faith. And a faithful person doesn't have to reject science.

Being a dino-obsessed Christian kid taught me a value we're going to explore today: Curiosity. How can I love T-Rex and God? The King of Lizards and the King of Kings?

That was far from the last question I'd ever ask about my faith. And friends, as we're moving into our final core value today, we'll see that God created us for curiosity. It's a posture God invites us to take that clashes with the posture of certainty we so often associate with people of faith.

God created a massive, sprawling universe we'll never finish exploring. God has given it all to us to explore, to discover, to uncover so that we might always know God better and better.

This posture - curiosity instead of certainty - informs how we love, how we serve the world around us.

Message

It's been a long-standing tradition here at Catalyst to set aside the last weeks of the church year to explore our core values. What sets us apart as a church? What makes us unique, different from other congregations?

When I first came to Catalyst, our core values were Love, Grow and Serve. Those weren't particularly unique - one of the churches down the street has the same three core values. As God continued to work among us, and as the culture around us changed, our Leadership Team discerned that God was instilling a new set of values among us. Those were Friendship, Diversity, Discipleship and Pilgrimage.

Those were our core values for several years, but of course now we're on the cusp of a major change yet again. And yet again, our core values are shifting. So for the next month, I want to explore with you the values that are shaping us moving forward.

This series is called "Next Level" because we don't see this as a fundamental shift. We're not tossing out our old values and getting brand new ones. Rather, we're building on the values that have shaped us for the last several years.

Not unlike a video game, where the first levels let us practice the basic skills that will be necessary in later stages, all that's come before us has prepared us for this new incarnation of our church family.

[Slide] So this month, we're exploring Friendship, Collective Liberation, Change and Curiosity.

We began with Friendship. We explored how our culture so easily turns people into products, how that has created a loneliness epidemic, and how we as a church can be a site of healing rather than part of the problem.

We saw how our original Core Value 'Love' evolved into Collective Liberation, a commitment to prioritize the most vulnerable in our society.

Last week, saw how 'Grow' became 'Change' — a conviction that God is always doing a work in us and in our world, a work we're invited into by God's grace!

Today, we're concluding with maybe the most surprising of our new core values - Curiosity. It's surprising because churches mostly aren't know for being curious; quite the opposite - Churches are the place we already have all the answers, aren't they?

It's also surprising because this is an evolution of our value 'Serve'. What could serving possibly have to do with curiosity? We'll get there, but I want to start with this idea that Christians aren't meant to be curious.

This is a relatively recent development - probably since the rise of fundamentalism in the late 1800s. Fundamentalism was a reaction to more than 200 years of Christian curiosity, in everything from archaeology to the physical sciences to biblical criticism. The vast majority of the major scientific advancements in astronomy, medicine, physics, biology and more were made by people of faith. But they called into question the words of the Bible. Is God the creator if the earth isn't the center of the universe? Are humans made in God's image if we evolved from apes? Is the Bible true if events like the global flood and the Exodus didn't happen, or happened on a much smaller scale than the Bible claims? What if Moses didn't write the first five books of the Bible? What if Paul didn't write some of the letters we attribute to him?

You can imagine how some Christians felt like their whole faith was under attack, so they just pushed it all away and insisted they were going to focus on 'the fundamentals', which ended up being a hyper-literalist reading of the Bible and narrow focus on individual salvation.

They didn't want to look around anymore, because the universe had gotten too big, too scary, too unpredictable, so they just hid away inside their church buildings and behind their bibles.

But you know what happened: the rest of the world didn't stop learning, exploring, growing. So Christians - especially Evangelicals - became known as incurious, anti-science. We became known as a people who claimed to have all the answers.

Which is a shame, because God never intended that for us.

Turn with us to Proverbs 25.

I love love love the book of Proverbs. It's a wisdom book. To be 'wise' meant, to the Hebrews, 'living the way you were created to live.' Wise didn't mean smart; it meant living in an integrated harmony with God, your neighbors and the world.

This particular proverb talks about a king - something we here in America have a hard time understanding. The ideal king is supposed to be the prototypical citizen. In other words, you should be able to look at your king and see how you're supposed to live. (I know, I know. Like I said, it's an aspirational idea). All of that to say, don't get hung up on the king language here. This is for all of us:

It is God's privilege to conceal things and the king's privilege to discover them. — Proverbs 25:2

God hides things; kings discover them. That word the NLT translates 'privilege' there is the Hebrew word we more often translate as 'glory'. I like to think of it as 'fame'.

God hides things; we find them.

Huh?

[Picture] When I was a kid, my grandpa loved to play hide and seek with me and my cousins. He would hide, and we'd have to seek. My grandpa was a big guy - probably 6'2 and a huge gut. His favorite hiding place was behind the curtains in the living room - he'd let his gut poke out just a bit.

He was not difficult to find.

Because... hiding really wasn't the point of the game. The point was the joy in being found, scooping us up into a hug as we all shrieked with joy.

So... yeah. It's God's glory to hide stuff. So we can experience the glory of the Eureka moment. That sense of awe that those moments in *Jurassic Park* or the images NASA delivers us from the various space telescopes.

That's what Paul insists over in Romans... God is evident in the world, if we'll only be curious enough to look:

For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. — Romans 1:20

Can we pause here a moment? Because it's honestly breathtaking to me that God created a whole universe for us to explore, and God expects us to explore because the more we learn, the better our picture of who God is.

Song

Okay, but how did we go from Serve to Curiosity?

Great question. Those of y'all who have been part of our teams exploring and shaping what's next know we've been asking the 'Why' question a lot. Why do we serve? Well... Jesus tells us to. Why? It's a tangible way for us to love our neighbors. And remember from week 1 on Friendship - 'neighbors' for Jesus are just about everyone.

But when you look at how the Church is known for serving, it's not very neighborly. Often we serve with strings attached, treating people as projects. We still grapple with the awful legacy of the Atlantic slave trade, Native genocide and colonialism, all of which were carried out in the name of Jesus, under the auspices of saving souls.

It's that same air of certainty, that conviction that we have all the answers and have to take Jesus to the rest of the world.

But we know here that we don't take Jesus anywhere. Like Paul said, Jesus is already everywhere in the world. At best, we have the privilege - the glory? - to point out where Jesus is evident in other cultures, how they may in fact be closer to God than they realized.

And along the way, we can learn more and more about the God who is bigger than all our boxes.

What happens when we approach serving not with certainty, but curiosity? What happens when we stop assuming we have a monopoly on Jesus and instead listen for how he's inviting us into the larger world?

Holy Curiosity is what is going to propel us as a congregation. In a world that's had more than enough of certainty, we're going to lead with questions, not answers. We're going to experiment, not rely on formulas.

Communion + Examen

asdfasdf

one

two

three

four

Assignment + Blessing

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