

Prayer: Observant God, help us to have eyes like you. Help us to look out at all creation and reflect, pause, look and listen. Help us see creation for all the big and small ways it communicates with us and each other. May we appreciate all the ways your beauty is around us. Amen.

Job 12 ⁷ "But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ⁸ ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

⁹ Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? ¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being. ¹¹ Does not the ear test words as the palate tastes food? ¹² Is wisdom with the aged, and understanding in length of days? ¹³ "With God are wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding.

Hello, my name is Tyler Bublitz and I am the Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministry at First Lutheran Church in Bemidji. And I'm also the host for the Faith and Science podcast. And welcome back to another Lenten devotion for the Northwest Minnesota synod.

I chose Job. It's a book that I don't feel like we dig into a lot. But when we're looking at care of creation and thinking about it in this time I felt this text really just kind of sprung out. When you're looking at this text, it's kind of hard to imagine being still in Lent and it's cold as we're approaching spring, which we all know spring in Minnesota really doesn't happen till late April or the beginning of May. But yet, where we are, the first day of Spring happens the 20th of March every single year. And we might still have a foot and a half of snow outside!

But yet, when we look at this text, it's causing us to reflect, to stop, to pause, which to me speaks Lent all over. And it is causing us to stop and pause and look and listen to the animals, to the birds, to the fish, to the plants. And so when was the last time that you really paused to look and think about these things?

About five years ago, I had the privilege of being able to go down and catch the sandhill crane migration which is going on right about now. It was absolutely incredible. I would consider it myself one of the biggest moments of feeling God just beyond the horizon as thousands and thousands and thousands of sandhill cranes come into a 70 mile stretch of the Platte River and upwards of a half a million will be there in that stretch of time. As you're feeling this awe and wonder of everything that is going on, it's very easy to miss what is actually going on. That's the middle of their migration. They stop there for weeks. Why? They stop there for weeks to make sure they have food, do mating rituals, and I would argue also to socialize together. They're taking time to rest, to continue for a major part of their journey that is still to come.

When we look at trees and plants, as we've dug into looking at how their root systems come together, we're realizing more and more, that they are more and more connected. Having their version of the Internet underneath our feet. That they're able to communicate with fungus to connect trees together so that they are able to talk and figure out what the needs are of different tree individuals.

If you talk to any hunter who has gone out and is hiking the back woods, they'll tell you the easiest path is a deer path. Not because deer paths make it easier. Deer are lazy. Deer really like the easiest route to get from point A to point B. And so it's the easiest elevation climb through the woods.

As we have gone through a lot of different changes within our globe, within our world, we are recognizing that our waterways are being affected. What better way than to look at fish. Seeing

fish that aren't native to areas suddenly cropping up in new areas. Finding how that is threatening local fish. But also even looking at different salmon species, and things of that nature that are being affected by simple things like tire debris, the little micro plastics that we're putting into the waterways. Are we taking the time to notice these?

The back half of this text talks about the wisdom that can come from these. But the kicker to me is when I'm reflecting and thinking about these, you have to pause. You have to look. You have

to be observant enough to actually notice these things. It's not blatantly in front of us. To me, that is so much the character of God. God always is surprising us when we look. God is always looking for ways to connect with us, if we look. If we're willing to go through the process that it takes to be observant, which means to stop, to look and to listen, and then to interpret. And then it's like God suddenly starts laying out the book in front of us and say thank you for pulling up a chair, and I've been trying to tell you these things.

When I was in high school, I went and did a lot of Christmas bird counts. People love talking about how there isn't birds around Christmas time. There are plenty of birds. There are plenty of birds that stick around as long as there is food and water. But are you observant enough to notice? Are you observant enough to think about that other birds are migrating south. This is their winter vacation because it's warmer down here. We have to be observant to be able to notice these things. To look for these things. And to think about these things. So as we're in this Lenten season, I challenge you to sit and reflect and think about; when have you stopped and looked and listened for God out here?

Because the more we do that, I would argue, the more we get to actually see the creative God that we have.