



“Hidden Treasures: Familiar Stories, Sacred Layers”

June 21, 2026: Week 1: “Perspective Matters - Eastern vs. Western”

Denver United Methodist Church

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Scripture: Genesis 1:1-31

Handout: “Perspective Matters - Openness to an “Unfolding Truth”

Visuals: Mallet & Spike , Round Loaf of Bread, trash can

Outcome: To compel and inspire the congregation to approach Scripture with curiosity, humility, and wonder, learning that beneath familiar stories are hidden treasures that draw us into deeper intimacy with God.

Sermon: Opening Question: "What if we've been reading the Bible correctly, but incompletely?"

- I. Drop “fake” Bible into trash-can
 - A. What are you feeling right now? What emotions are you experiencing?
 1. Uncomfortable, angry, shocked, bothered, tense, offended.
 - B. If I had just thrown a regular book into the trashcan would you have reacted the same way?
 - C. Probably not. And that’s fascinating.
 1. Whether you realize it or not, something inside of you believes something is different about the Holy Bible.
 2. So why are we not in the Bible on a more frequent basis?
 - D. Too often the church has pushed the Bible on us with a mallet/hammer and nail type approach
 1. Force approach: Read it more. Study it more often.
 2. Pastors / Church leaders use force through: guilt, obligation, pressure, performance...
 3. Scripture was never meant to be forced into someone's life through pressure.
 4. It’s meant to draw us in. To compel us.
 - a) Like the aroma of warm break coming from the kitchen.
 - b) Jesus constantly compelled people through: wonder, mystery, story, invitation, questions, wrestling with emotions

5. Let me ask a few questions?
 - a) “Why do so many Christians treat their Bible more like a family heirloom... not a handwritten love letter?”
 - b) “How did we end up treating the Bible like something to display... instead of something to cherish?”
 - (1) A worn and torn Bible is usually owned by one who is not.
 - c) “Many Christians revere the Bible... but few actually explore it.
 - (1) We protect it.
Display it.
Carry it.
 - (2) But too often...
we don’t open it like someone searching for hidden treasure.”
6. “I fear one of the great tragedies of modern Christianity...is that many people respect the Bible deeply...while rarely experiencing its beauty personally.”
7. “Some people own a Bible the way people own fine china:
 - a) special, respected, rarely used.”

E. The GOAL of this series: not to force you to read the Bible more. It is to help you fall in love with it again or even for the first time.

1. Inform congregation about the FAKE Bible.

F. Here’s what the Sermon Series looks like:

1. Today: Perspective Matters: Eastern vs. Western
2. Week 2: Moses: The Beauty In Slowing Down
3. Week 3: Wrestling With The Odd

II. **Perspective Matters** - Reference Marty Soloman / BEMA Leadership Podcast

A. Gain agreement (congregation/listeners)

1. Use Sanctuary podium and alter table. Choir member vs. person sitting in pew
 - a) Looking at same objects - different angles - different details
 - (1) Deconstruction of theology is ok - (My journey with Catholicism)
 - (2) Open to deconstruction did not ruin my relationship, it emboldened it.
 - b) Read Creation Story: Genesis 1:1-31

B. Our Mindset When Approaching the Bible

1. The Bible was not written TO us, but FOR us - that should change your approach when reading
 - a) My book about my Dad’s teachings: *Reset Your Mindset*
 - b) How do we prove Grandpop existed. How do we prove he is real.
2. We are foreigners reading an ancient Eastern text.
 - a) When visiting another country, do you not try and learn their customs?
 - b) Tipping: Japan it is offensive
 - c) Prolonged Eye contact: considered aggressive in Asia
3. A large portion of the Bible is not to be taken just at Face Value: Scripture is layered intentionally
4. The Authors hide treasure in literary structure, symbolism, poetry, repetition, and tension.
5. Wrestling with the Scripture is not rebellion - it is an invitation

6. Discovery leads to deeper transformation
 7. The Bible is meant to be experienced relationally, not merely analyzed intellectually
 8. The Bible is not written as a source to prove God's existence.
- C. Look at Worksheet "Perspective Matters - Openness to an "Unfolding Truth"
1. One of the biggest challenges we face: we don't just live in a different time, we think differently.
 - a) For most of humanity, people understood themselves primarily as part of a family, a tribe, a community, a nation.
 - b) Then something changed...
 - c) Around the time of the Greeks, especially the Hellenistic period, culture began shifting toward the individual. Questions changed from "Who are we?" to "Who am I?"
 - d) The focus moved from community identity to individual identity. From collective responsibility to individual rights.
 - e) From "How do I serve the group?" to "How does the group serve me?"
 - f) This way of thinking has become so normal to us, we don't even notice it.
 - g) The challenge is that when we open the Bible, we often bring the modern individual mindset with us, even though the people who wrote and first read these texts lived in a deeply communal world.
 2. For example: When we read Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you..."
 - a) We immediately hear that as a promise to me personally.
 - b) But Jeremiah wasn't writing to one individual. He was writing to an entire nation in exile.
 - c) The original audience heard "you" as "you-all" The promise was communal before it was personal.
 - d) The Bible was written to people who thought "we." We tend to think "me."
 3. Examples:
 - a) Western - How does God fit into my life's plan
 - b) Eastern - How does my life fit into God's plan
 - c) Western - Read for information
 - d) Eastern - Read for transformation
 - e) Western - What does this mean to me?
 - f) Eastern - What does this mean to them?
- D. Reference Resource provided to congregation: Eastern vs. Western
1. Hebrew Way of Thinking
 - a) Word Pictures & images, Stories, Poetry, Imagery, Symbolism
 2. Western Way of Thinking
 - a) Words, Ideas, definitions, outlines, lists & bullet points
 3. Way of thinking: Numbers
 - a) Western - see numbers primarily as Quantity, $5 + 2 = 7$
 - b) Hebrews - See number primarily as Quality or symbol
 - (1) $5 =$ Books of Moses, $2 =$ Tablets of Moses, $7 =$ Days of Creation
 4. Way of thinking: Eternity
 - a) Western - Detached from this world, starts after death, when world is over
 - b) Eastern - In this world, life in harmony with God, begins in this life

5. Societal thinking
 - a) Western - focused on the individual
 - b) Eastern - focused on community, the individual is secondary
 6. Gods Existence
 - a) Western - tries to prove the existence of God
 - b) Eastern - Assumes the existence of God
 7. Truth
 - a) Western - truth is static and unchanging
 - b) Eastern - Truth is unfolding
- E. Circling back to the Creation Story - put this mindset into practice
1. Why were ancient creation Stories written
 - a) Less concerned with modern scientific explanation, or “how”
 - b) More concerned with: identity, order, meaning, purpose, relationship to the divine, and how humanity fits into the world.
 - c) Western Focus: “how was the world created?”
 - d) Ancient Focus: Who are we? Why are we here? Who rules this world? How should we live inside it?
 2. Identity & Focus:
 - a) Egypt: Your value comes from serving Pharaoh
 - b) Babylon Creation story: Humans exist to serve the gods.
 - c) Genesis: Humans are image-bearers of God (Radically different)
 - (1) Will Discuss further in the next few weeks
 3. Creation Story is a poem - has poetic structure
 - a) The goal of an Eastern teacher / author is to “bury treasure in a lesson or story.”
 - (1) Multiple layers of depth intentionally, increases the amount of discovery
 - (2) We are to be hunting for odd things, or things that don’t make common sense...(talking snake)
 - (3) Night & Day - Jewish Culture, the day begins at sunset
 - b) A literary device used is called a Chiasm -
 - (1) Very effective way for an author to bury treasure within a story
 - (a) Expl: stories are constructed in an inverted fashion
 - (b) The first part of the story mirrors the last part, the second part of the story mirrors the second to the last part, and so on
 - (c) Every chiasm has a center verse or word that is the hidden treasure
 - (i) Moad - one of the four words that translate to Sabbath, rest
 - (2) Why is this important?
 - (a) Remember who this is being written to
 - (b) A culture of people who for 430 years were told their value come from their production. Making bricks
 - (c) God rescues them and they wander for 40 years in the desert

- (d) Sabbath, rest is a gift from God
 - (i) You are human beings, not human doings
 - (ii) It's not about what you are doing and not even about what you are not doing
 - (iii) It's about remembrance
 - (a) You are loved, accepted and valued by God
- (e) God got the Israelites out of Egypt, but now He has to get Egypt mentality out of the Israelites
 - (i) The Hidden Treasure is the importance of REST
 - (ii) There is tremendous benefit and value that comes out of the practice of Rest.
 - (a) COVID - forced to slow down
 - (i) Focused on Family
 - (ii) Remembered the value to family time.

III. Close

- A. If all of that was hiding in a story you've probably heard dozens—maybe hundreds—of times...What else is hiding in these pages?
 1. Think about the people you love most.
 2. You don't spend time with them because you need more information about them.
 3. You spend time with them because intimacy matters.
 4. If Genesis isn't merely answering the question, "How was the world created?" but is teaching us where our value comes from...
 5. What treasures might be hidden in the stories of Moses? Or Joshua? Or the lessons and parables Jesus taught?
 6. What treasures might be hidden in the stories you've read so many times that you no longer stop to ask questions?
 7. The Bible was never intended to be skimmed. It was inspired to be explored.
 8. God intentionally inspired Scripture in a way that would cause us to slow down, wrestle, wonder, question, and discover. Not because He was trying to hide Himself from us. But because He wanted us to spend time with Him.
 9. The Bible is not a text book for us to master. It is an invitation into relationship.
 10. My goal in this series is not to force you to read the Bible more.
 11. My goal is to help you fall in love with it again. Because beneath familiar stories are sacred layers. And every layer reveals more of the heart of God.
- B. So this week, I want to ask you to do something different.
 1. If you don't own one, find a study Bible - commentary notes
 2. Perspective: Think "we", not "me"
 3. Look for what is Odd. If it doesn't make sense, pause and ask why?
- C. Begin looking for treasure. Read slowly. Read curiously. Ask questions. Notice what feels odd. Pay attention to what doesn't make immediate sense. And ask yourself: What might God be inviting me to discover? Because if this much treasure was hidden in Genesis... I can't wait to show you what we're going to discover next week.
- D. Amen