



HEART FOR THE *NOT YET*

ACTS 17:6b

SAMPLE SERVICE SERIES

FOR USE ALONGSIDE *ART FOR THE NOT YET* PROMOTION

INTRODUCTION

Melrose Baptist Church in Roanoke, VA, offered the *Heart for the Not Yet* series as a worshipful invitation to pray, reflect, and create around the theological prompts connected to BGAV's *Art for the Not Yet* arts collective initiative (more details on page 21).

The combined sermon, scripture, and music document is shared as submitted to *Faith & Field*, simply as a resource for churches considering how these prompts might take shape in their own worship and congregational life.

Church leaders are welcome to adapt, simplify, or reimagine these materials for their own context as they invite members to engage prayerfully and creatively with God's heart for the people, places, and possibilities still unfolding.

ART *for the*
NOT YET



SPECIAL THANKS

Sermon outlines and manuscripts provided by Rev. Mark Mofield, senior pastor of Melrose Baptist Church.

Worship music suggestions provided by Rev. Dr. Connie Cruze, associate pastor and minister of music at Melrose Baptist Church.

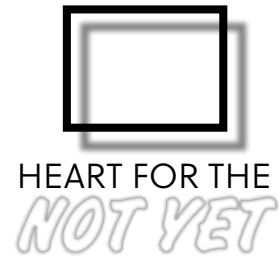
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COMBINED SERMON AND WORSHIP REFERENCE

by Melrose Baptist Church, Roanoke, VA

Compiled from sermon manuscripts
and worship flow sheets



SERIES OVERVIEW

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Music: (none provided)

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WEEK 6: THE MISSION STILL UNFOLDING 15

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Music: *Creator God, Creating Still; The Family of God; Something Beautiful; Let Your Heart Be Broken; Morning Has Broken; Change My Heart, O God*

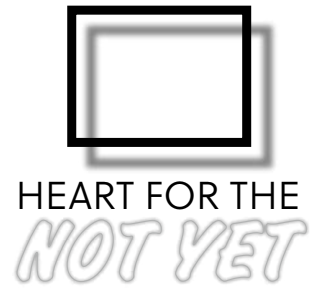
Lend your creativity to Art for the Not Yet—a collaborative arts project based on BGAV's 2026 Annual Meeting theme, *Heart for the Not Yet!*

See page 21 for details on how you and your church can participate.



WEEK 1:

CAN WE COUNT THE STARS?



SCRIPTURE

Genesis 15:5

SERMON OUTLINE

- I. Looking up at the night sky at Walloon Lake. Realizing how many stars we cannot see.
 - a. Astronomers tell us that each one of those stars represents other suns, other solar systems. Each star represents, quite literally, a galaxy of possibilities.
 - b. To look up at the night sky is not just an appreciation of beauty or an act of intellectual curiosity. It is a chance to imagine and dream, a chance to dare to ask the hopeful question, "What could be?"
- II. "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. So shall your descendants be." I think it is easy to hear in God's promise to Abraham an assurance of children. But I believe these words capture even more than the promise of a family tree.
 - a. There are more possibilities than we often consider.
 - i. In a world that is often controlled by an "either-or" worldview, God invites us to consider that He can offer far more possibilities than our own limited scopes consider.
 - b. Preparing for the future requires more than a mirror.
 - i. We think of the future in terms of what we cannot or do not know. God reveals the future as the glimmers of light that we can see. Though they may not have definition to our perspective, those who come after us are in our view. We are called to live today for their sake, not just for our own sake.
 - c. In times of fear, there is still the light of hope.
 - i. For Abraham, darkness represented the time of greatest peril and threat. It was a time to seek shelter and protection. You didn't typically move around at night. Yet, in that time when his attention could most easily be captured by potential danger and threats, God revealed what Abraham had to look forward to, what he had to hope for.
- III. Heart for the Not Yet – I want to challenge us to think about and prepare for the future by seeing what God sees, thinking what God thinks. I want to invite us to be like Abraham, to stand under the stars and hear God inviting us to live out the promise of a future that He is already giving birth to.

WEEK 1: CAN WE COUNT THE STARS?

- a. We learn in conversation with God. That is why an important element of this series will be taking time each week to pray with our hearts, our lips, and our hands.
 - i. Writing out words or phrases of prayer that will then be prayed over by leaders of our church each week. Those pieces of paper that we write on will be transformed into stars that will become a visual prompt that will be on display in our church and at the Baptist General Association of Virginia's Annual Meeting as a call to seek out and live into the future God is already making possible.
- IV. Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. Can you count the stars? Can you imagine the not yet that God says will be? That is the heart that God was forming in Abraham and the heart that I believe God wants to form in us.

WEEK 2:

THE WAITING HEART



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SCRIPTURE

Hosea 11:1-11

SERMON MANUSCRIPT

He looks out the window, and He waits.

He doesn't know exactly where they are, but at the same time He is sure He knows what they are doing and who they are doing it with. They try to cover it all up, say all the right words. They have learned how to fake a smile, how to say "I love you" in that way that you really can't tell if they are sincere or sarcastic. He remembers when they used to try to hide their sneaking around, thinking He couldn't hear the creaking floors or wouldn't recognize the sound of the front door closing no matter how quietly you try to close it. Oh He would call them out on it, for sure. They always promised to never do it again. There were tears, there were hugs. And inevitably, He would be back at the window, waiting.

These days, they don't even seem to try to hide anymore. He's not sure what is worse: being told a clear lie or the seeming lack of any care for Him to even make up a lie anymore. The feet fall with normal weight, the door closes more with a slam than a creak. Are they angry? No, not really. He could maybe make peace if they were shouting at Him, if He had done something that failed them somehow. He looks over at the pictures on the wall. There they are playing out in the yard. There they are picnicking by the river. There they are standing together that day on the top of the mountain, big smiles on everybody's faces. He has given them life, a home, food and water, joy and love and protection. Whenever the phone rang, He picked it up and He went to wherever they were. Yes, He had rules, but the rules were meant to protect them from danger and from wandering off into dangerous places with people who would not love them the way He does. Surely He has done everything a Father could do to take care of His children!

He waits, looking out the window, and He feels the heat rising in His chest. He could shout out that window, "Fine! This time just stay out! Don't come home! You don't want to be here anyway! I can't take this anymore!" He could walk away from the window, lock the door, and let them learn how hard the night outside truly can be. Nobody would fault Him. Maybe that is what they need, a little tough love. Now His chest is boiling. He can't take it anymore. He goes to the door, reaches for the handle, and walks out into the night, shouting as loud as He can, "Please come home!"

This is the surprising part of the story of Hosea. God, the Father, has every reason to rage and call down hellfire on the people of Israel, the people He had made a solemn covenant with and who had betrayed that covenant again and again to worship other gods, gods who only wanted to take from them and who could give them nothing. Everyone would expect YHWH to be the lion whose roar would signal their death. Instead, the roar of the lion, the shout of God, is to call these

WEEK 2: THE WAITING HEART

same Israelites to come back to Him, so that He can give them a home. In many ways, the prophet Hosea called attention to a fact that even today we often overlook: the Bible would be a whole lot shorter book if we were dealing with a God with no grace. The fall of Eden, Cain and Abel, the worship of golden calves, the age of the Judges – any one of these eras and so many others would have marked sufficient ending points for a God who cared nothing for an imperfect creation, a God more interested in demonstrating strength than love. But the Bible does not end at these moments and so many others like them. God’s story with creation continued, and it continues today, because God is the lion whose roar is loud in order so that it can be heard in every corner of the globe, inviting any and all who hear to come back to Him, our loving Father.

I recently read an article which talked about our culture’s tendency to engage through anger. The term the author used was one I was unfamiliar with, but one that I find quite appropriate: “the rage economy.” So much of our culture, from our social media to our politics, is built around building up the fuel of anger and then engaging and acting on that fuel. Anger becomes reason enough to say what we say, to do what we do. It reaches a point where we can convince ourselves that the appropriate response to a broken world is to be angry. If we are angry, then we are doing what we are supposed to do.

I saw the reality of this play out just recently when I received an email from a local pastor calling on me to join him at a recent Roanoke City Council meeting to speak against the building of a casino downtown. Now we can have a conversation about whether or not that is a good move for our community, but what I found interesting is that this pastor and the church he serves not only have not expressed any interest in partnering with me or us on any other ministry but has actively resisted partnership and voiced condemnation for churches like ours that did not perfectly align with them on certain theological points. I read the email and wondered, “Why is it that you are asking for unity in anger and would refuse unity in mission?”

Perhaps never have these words from Hosea been more needed. God the lion, who has every reason to be angered by a creation that refuses to have anything to do with their Creator and Sustainer, cries out, “How can I give you up? How can I hand you over? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.” The vision that Hosea shares with Israel and with us is not that of a God who does not get angry; instead, we meet a God who intends to not let anger take over, who is committed to His love being the prime motivator of His thoughts and His deeds. Can you imagine the patience that this takes? Can you imagine the self-control this takes? Can you imagine the commitment to love, the desire for joy and peace, it takes to not give into anger? Funny thing is, all of those attributes are ascribed to the Spirit of God by the apostle Paul, who goes on to say that those fruits of God’s Spirit are manifest in you and I when we let God set the course for our lives through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How God meets His creation in Hosea is how we are called to meet creation as God’s people – passionately, broken by brokenness, committed to transformation through love and grace and truth and righteousness.

“Wait for the LORD” the Psalmist says. “Be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” Waiting for the LORD doesn’t mean sitting around and doing nothing. Waiting for the LORD means taking the time to make sure that our heart, our motivations, our attitudes and our intentions match up with the LORD in whose name we live and work. Waiting doesn’t mean

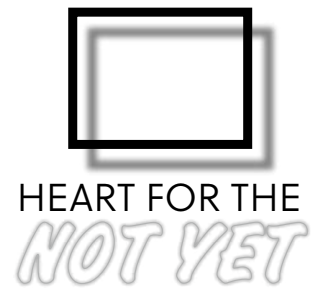
WEEK 2: THE WAITING HEART

jumping out and then letting God try to catch up to us; waiting means pausing so that God can draw us to where He is. Waiting is asking God to help us move from Hosea 11:7 – “To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all” – to Hosea 11:8 – “How can I give you up?” If God is willing to wait to approach a broken world in love and grace, then let our hearts be willing to wait as well.

Hosea’s prophetic ministry centered on calling a nation back to a relationship with a graceful, loving God that seemed uninterested in such a relationship. What nation, what community, what group of people has God put on your heart to pray that they will turn and love their Creator and Savior? Write your answer on the sheet of paper and lift a prayer for those people that they would hear the loving voice of God, through you or through someone else. Or do you need to ask God to help you wait for anger to turn into grace? Write a simple prayer asking God to move you from v. 7 to v. 8.

WEEK 3:

THE EDGE OF BELIEF



SCRIPTURE

John 4:16-26, 39-42

SERMON MANUSCRIPT

I just finished reading a book in which author Lee Camp argues that Christianity is more than just a particular set of beliefs. Camp argues that Christianity is a particular interpretation of history – what has been, what is, and what will be. As Christians, we believe that God is bringing creation to a day when all things will be made new and when every power and authority, every life, will live in full honor and service to the Creator and Savior and Sustainer of the universe. In other words, as Christians our attention is as much on the “not yet” of what God will do as it is on the “already” of what we have witnessed and experienced of God’s work and presence. To put it more plainly, we believe that God is invested in the long game of transforming creation, and we live to worship God for who He is and to patiently prepare and participate in what God is about to do.

We talked about the patience part a little bit 2 weeks ago as we looked at Hosea and heard the voice of God practice a patience that was willing to set aside anger at Israel’s failures in the hope that His love could still bring them back home. God was willing to wait in grace for change. Today, I want to build on that idea of waiting, and invite us to see that Christ’s patience is not passivity.

A couple of weeks ago, Amy and I were visiting Justin and Hailey on a quick trip to North Carolina. As we were getting lunch ready, my attention was drawn to the sweatshirt Justin was wearing. It was a sweatshirt that had his church’s mission statement on it: “All are welcomed, questions are embraced, wounds are healed, and lives are changed.” For some reason, I found myself concentrating on that phrase, “Questions are embraced.” There was both a sense of comfort and disturbance in that phrase for me. As modern day churches in America, those other three phrases give voice to the missions we have identified and the results we have celebrated. We report the number of baptisms, the number of hungry people we have fed. But when it comes to questions, we like to tell ourselves and the world that we are where you find answers. I can’t remember the last time I heard a pastor brag about the number of questions that had been asked in their church in a month.

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is a story that revolves just as much around questions as it does around answers. Jesus asks the woman for a drink of water, and she responds with a question of why Jesus, a Jew, would ask a Samaritan for something to drink. Jesus then says if she knew who he was she would be asking him for living water, to which she responds with another question, “Where would you get this water from without a bucket?” When she asks for this water that will not cause her to thirst, Jesus then asks her to bring her husband to him. When she says she is not married, Jesus responds by telling her he knows her life. She then asks

WEEK 3: THE EDGE OF BELIEF

another question, "Since you know so much, where is it that we should worship God, in Jerusalem or on Mt. Gerizim?" Jesus doesn't choose, instead telling her that the where is less important than the how.

I think our tendency is to focus on the answers to the questions as what is important in this exchange. However, I believe the questions are just as significant as the answers! The woman moves from asking questions that assume animosity and adversity to questions that are seeking understanding of this person she is talking to at the well. In the same way, Jesus' questions reveal that this woman is someone who he sees, he welcomes, and that he believes has something to offer to him and to her community. Perhaps most importantly, the questions become rungs on the ladder that build the conversation to a place of trust where, when Jesus reveals that He is the Messiah, she can hear the good news. Had Jesus started the conversation by saying, "I am the Messiah", I imagine the response from the woman would have been an eye roll and the words, "Sure you are!" Their exchange of questions broke down any defensiveness and instead created space for possibility.

Which brings me to what is most fascinating about this entire moment: ultimately, the woman's testimony is a question. Look at John 4:28-29:

Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?'

I have to wonder: would we elect this woman at this point to be a Sunday School teacher? A pastor? Doesn't a true disciple have more confidence? Isn't faith more sure? Yet notice what happens next in verse 30:

They left the city and were on their way to him.

The Samaritan woman may not have been completely convinced yet of who Jesus was, but just the fact that she was willing to give voice to a possibility, to ask the question, "Could he be the Messiah" was enough to move an entire town to come spend time with Jesus.

As the church we often focus the purpose of our ministry on getting people into the baptistry. And indeed, that moment when someone enters those waters and with their words and actions proclaims that they are uniting their life with the life of the risen Lord is the most beautiful and holy and important moment in our faith walk. However, perhaps this encounter with Christ in John should remind us that inviting people to the wells where questions can be asked can be just as transformative and important as calling them to the rivers of baptism. These "well" moments are sacred and beautiful because we understand we are truly valued and welcomed by a graceful Savior whose patience welcomes our questions and stretches our imagination so that we can truly understand the beauty of the life he offers.

How do we create these well moments? I want to close with a few thoughts. First, we approach the world not as targets or prospects or adversaries but as people. They have lives, they have stories. Questions can help us move beyond our biases and our assumptions to see someone as they really are and perhaps even understand how Christ has already been working in their life. Second, we can approach the world asking for help, not just telling the world how we can help them. We have a wonderful gift, a treasure Paul calls it, that we bring to the world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, that same Christ asked the woman at the well, "Give me something to drink." He recognized her need for living water, but also recognized that she could

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meet a need as well. Christ sees value in others even before they understand the value in Him. We should seek to do the same. Finally, we approach the world valuing the question as much as the answer. So many times we think that if we cannot answer someone's question correctly, we are failing in our mission. But sometimes, the value of a question is not in whether or not we are able to answer but in the ability of the question to keep the conversation going, to continue to search and explore. Never forget, an entire town ultimately accepted Jesus as Lord not because the woman at the well gave an answer but because she asked a question, "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" Her question invited exploration, more questions, the search for encounter, and made possible the proclamation, "Now we know."

As we continue to seek to form hearts for the not yet, I want to invite us to prayerfully consider the questions that are before us. Are there questions that you have or that someone else has asked you that you have struggled to resolve? This morning I want to invite you to write on your piece of paper that question and give it to the Lord in prayer. You may be hesitant because you think it's not faithful enough, that it's too aggressive a question to ask Jesus. The woman at the well's first question to Jesus was basically, "Who do you think you are?" Jesus didn't turn her away. He won't turn you away either. Or maybe the question is one you have been asked by a friend or family member and you have struggled with how to respond. Write that question down, and ask Christ to help you find an answer, an answer that either satisfies their thirst or at least keeps the conversation going, helping them see that their question is not a reason to walk away but an invitation to draw closer, to drink from the waters of life. Christ welcomes our questions. Let us meet him at the well this morning.

MUSIC SELECTIONS

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; The Family of God; Creator God, Creating Still; How Great Thou Art; Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us; Trust His Heart; Seek Ye First; Because He Lives; Melrose Is a Place of Grace; How Great Thou Art

WEEK 4:

THE CHURCH BECOMING



HEART FOR THE
NOT YET

SCRIPTURE

Acts 6:1-6

SERMON OUTLINE

- I. Attending a football game at Clemson
 - a. Walking around town and hearing everybody yell, "Go Tigers!"
 - b. When you would see someone wearing a Duke shirt, you would walk up to them and whisper, "Go Duke!"
 - i. Felt like we needed to tiptoe around those who very obviously were not of our community
- II. In Acts 6, we see the impact that such an attitude can have in the church
 - a. In a community that had formed around the practice that "all who believed were together and had all things in common", the developing church is struggling with what happens when they started paying attention to their differences.
 - i. Many in the church spoke primarily Aramaic, like a smaller group spoke primarily Greek.
 - ii. Language not only makes connection easier, it becomes a uniting force.
 - b. From the moment of Pentecost, the gospel had crossed language barriers. What does that mean for the church?
 - i. The young church struggled, ignoring the primarily Greek speaking widows and focusing more on the Aramaic speaking.
- III. The solution that the church reaches is often seen as the birth of what we consider deacon ministry today. However, this moment is important for another reason. This is the moment that the young church took a step in its development, becoming a church that learned to change who it was looking for.
 - a. We tend to build community around what we have in common with others.
 - b. The call of being the church is to build community around what Christ has made common to us all – grace, salvation, love, mission.
 - i. Christ is what bridges all that would divide us. To be the church, we don't look for what we have in common with one another; we look for Christ who has offered Himself as the one to bring us together.

WEEK 4: THE CHURCH BECOMING

- c. The result? In Acts, a church that threatened to split in two became a church through which, according to verse 7, "the word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."
- IV. This table asks us to unite not around what commonalities we share, but instead around what has been shared with us: the broken body and shed blood of our Savior.
 - a. Too many times the church has been caught in the failure of offering this table only to those who look like us, sound like us, think like us. We unite around what we like about each other rather than the love Christ has offered to the world. In a world where we often focus on what is broken in someone else, the table asks us to take up our own brokenness, in the promise that Christ makes all of our brokenness whole. The table does not allow for Hebrews and Hellenists or whatever labels we want to put out there; the table asks us to be one in Christ, one because of Christ.
 - b. The table helps us become the Church Christ died for us to be, rose for us to be, called us out to be. Can we see who Christ is asking us to become?

PRAYER PROMPT

Take a moment to sit in silence. Prayerfully ask God, "What do you need to do in me to help me see the person or people that you want me to see?" Write down a word or phrase that this question prompts in your soul.

MUSIC SELECTIONS

The Family of God; Let Your Heart Be Broken; We Are An Offering; The Communion Hymn; Open My Eyes That I May See; Blest Be the Tie

WEEK 5:

THE WORK BEFORE THE HARVEST



HEART FOR THE
NOT YET

SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 3:1; John 5:2-9

SERMON OUTLINE

- I. When Eliashib and his fellow priests set to work on rebuilding the Sheep Gate in the wall of Jerusalem after the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon, I wonder what they were hoping to accomplish?
 - a. Reclaim past glory
 - i. Many generations had passed since Israel had been anything close to a significant power in the world. The glory of David and Solomon had long given way to division, defeat, and humiliation.
 - ii. The rebuilding of the Sheep Gate and the rest of the wall around Jerusalem was a necessity as any city required a means of defense. But rebuilding the wall also was an act of reclaiming sovereignty and identity as a people and a nation. They were back!
 - iii. Reclaiming past glory is a good thing, but the truth is that, by most historical accounts, while the rebuilding efforts led by Nehemiah and Ezra succeeded, the finished product was a far cry from the heights reached by David and Solomon. For some, the rebuilt wall was as much a source of comfort as it was a source of pain, as it reminded some Israelites that they were still a vassal state of a foreign empire and not anything close to what they had been previously.
 - b. Preservation
 - i. Not just the protection of a city, but the preservation of a unique identity and culture and faith. Exile in Babylon had challenged the Israelites not just because of a lack of independence but also because 70 years in slavery had threatened their ability to hold on to their Scriptures, to their traditions, and to their unique calling and identity as God's chosen people.
 - ii. Rebuilding the Sheep Gate and the wall could very well have been an act of trying to hold on to the past. As long as there was a wall, as long there was a Sheep Gate, then there was continuity with the past. With everything that exile had cost Israel, the wall and the gate were a symbol that not everything had been lost.
 - iii. Preservation is a good thing, but when we focus on preservation, our eyes are constantly looking to the past. Success and progress are gauged by whether we can get back to something or hold on to something. I love that when Jesus

WEEK 5: THE WORK BEFORE THE HARVEST

healed the lame man, a group identified only as “the Jews” by John could not celebrate the man’s obvious healing because he was breaking the Sabbath law by carrying his mat that he no longer needed to lay on. They were so caught up in preservation they could not rejoice in a miracle.

- II. Of course there is another interesting detail about Jesus’ miracle, a detail that takes us back to what Eliashib and his coworkers might have hoped to accomplish as they rebuilt the Sheep Gate in the days of Nehemiah. John tells us that the place where Jesus healed the lame man was “in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate”. Eliashib and his coworkers, in rebuilding the Sheep Gate, were preparing the landscape for the work of the Lord.
 - a. Jesus once told a parable about a man who sowed seeds on different types of ground, and that the seed grew to fruit when it landed on the fertile soil. The thing we rarely talk about in that parable is something that the citizens of the largely agrarian culture of Galilee would have readily known – fertile soil is not a happy accident, but the result of work done by a good farmer to make the soil ready.
 - b. Sometimes we think that the height of the work of the church is the proclamation of the gospel that leads to conversion. However, from Eliashib to Jesus, Scripture reminds us that sometimes ministry is creating an environment where the gospel can be received, heard, and understood. Sometimes the mission work cannot take place without someone to go and rightly assess the needs and the opportunities.
 - i. Disaster relief
 - c. The scary part of the ministry of preparation for us sometimes is that we don’t have control on what comes next. We do the work and trust that what the Lord will do with it is something perhaps greater than we could ever imagine.
 - i. Eliashib and his friends may have thought they were building a gate for people to walk into the city. Jesus used the gate to give a man the opportunity to walk into new life.
- III. In a time and place where we want instant gratification and gigabit powered answers, can we conceive that we may have to wait to see the fulfillment of what the Lord will do through our efforts? Perhaps the waiting can be an opportunity for us to let go of our smaller intentions for God’s bigger plans.
 - a. Take one of the sheets from the basket. Do you know someone who is in a season of waiting in their life? Is God asking you to be someone who takes action to help their hope be fulfilled? Is God asking you to help them while they wait? Write down the statement, “Lord, help me know how I can help _____”, putting the person’s first name or initials in the blank space. Then pray that question today and this week.

MUSIC SELECTIONS

The Family of God; Let Your Heart Be Broken; God Is Calling Through the Whisper; Lord of the Harvest; People Need the Lord; I Gave My Life for Thee / What Hast Thou Given for Me?

WEEK 6:

THE MISSION STILL UNFOLDING



HEART FOR THE
NOT YET

SCRIPTURE

Romans 15:18-29

SERMON OUTLINE

- I. "The best laid plans of mice and men...". How many of you know what that proverb means? How many of you know what the rest of the proverb is? How many of you know the origin of the Proverb?
 - a. The full proverb: "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley (go oft awry)."
 - b. The source: The poem "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns after he had turned up a mouse nest in his field with his plow.
 - c. The truth of the proverb is not localized to an 18th century Scottish poet's field.
- II. Case in point: The apostle Paul
 - a. Romans 15:28-29 – Paul's plan was to go to Jerusalem and deliver an offering to the church there before travelling to Rome to visit the church there in the empire's capital city before travelling on for his first visit to Spain. Rome was to be a temporary layover on a longer trip.
 - b. What happened? When he reached Jerusalem, he was beaten and nearly killed, put on trial by the high priest and 2 different Roman governors and imprisoned for several years. Yes, eventually, he made his stop in Rome, but not as part of a grander journey to Spain but instead in chains after appealing his case to Caesar. To the best of our knowledge, he never made it to Spain.
 - c. "I know that when I come to you," Paul wrote to the Romans, "I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ." There is a part of us that wants to scream back to our Bible, scream back through the pages and years of history, "The best laid plans of mice and men, Paul..."
- III. Would Paul understand what we would be saying to him? Not just about the fact that this odd proverb that we know its meaning without even finishing it was written over 1700 years after Paul. Even if Paul understood the proverb, would he agree with the sentiment?
 - a. Verses 20-23
 - i. Paul was well-versed already with the idea that his plans for ministry had to be adaptable to God's ongoing work

WEEK 6: THE MISSION STILL UNFOLDING

- ii. Paul's missional heart had accepted the fact that mission sometimes is a journey started without a destination
 - 1. Looking for places to eat while I was in Falls Church vs. discovering the French bakery while walking to the church. The bakery was the place I wanted to be all along!
- IV. I was in Falls Church for the Ascent Summit. Ascent is a missionary network established by the BGAV that crosses denominational and state lines for the purpose of Christ-centered evangelism on the North American continent. I went for a lot of reasons, but one of the things that I came away from the summit with is a statement that Ed Stetzer repeated numerous times as he reviewed different statistics about faith in the United States: something is happening.
 - a. That statement was both good and bad news
 - i. Generation Z, those aged 14-29, demonstrates the smallest percentage of those who identify as atheist/agnostic of any living generation. At the same time, that same Generation Z has the largest and fastest growing percentage of "nones", those who are not necessarily antagonistic towards faith but do not identify with any particular religious group.
 - ii. More young men are going to church now than 10-15 years ago. That's great and wonderful, until you see the statistics that, for the first time, the percentage of young women going to church is declining.
 - b. What was perhaps most enlightening for me was that Ed Stetzer, one of the leading missiologists in the country and probably in the world, who has spend decades studying and teaching evangelism and missions, when asked what the "something" that was happening was, said, "I don't know."
 - i. Our Time: Disrupted, Precarious, Opportune. As he put that on the screen, I remembered something Beth Moore said on the first night of the summit: the mission of the church since the parables of the Kingdom of God told by Jesus has been a mission of "wait, wait, wait, hurry!". In other words, our missional call is looking at what is unfolding in front of us, asking God where He wants us, and then jumping in the midst of a work He is already doing.
- V. Which takes me back to Paul. Verses 20-21.
 - a. Is it our ambition to go where we don't know? Is it our ambition to go where we are not comfortable, where we are at a disadvantage, where we don't know what the result will be or even for sure what the desired outcome should be?
 - i. "God has given us an infinite menu to explore, and we always order the chicken."
- VI. If we truly desire a heart for the not yet, if we truly want to be able to look at the heavens as Abraham did and see and accept a future of God's blessing in and through us for the world, then perhaps that starts with asking God to give us an ambition for that which is beyond our current ability to know, for those who are beyond our typical social circles, for needs that we can't see yet.

WEEK 6: THE MISSION STILL UNFOLDING

- a. Talking with a young man this week who works with young people, including many immigrants to our country. The ministry he works with was trying to provide these young immigrants with job skills to allow them to participate in the work force and provide for themselves and their current and future families. A funny thing happened. They found themselves in conversations with these young people who were growing increasingly anxious and depressed because they felt their lives were without value because their earning power was not what their families or the culture deemed as "successful". The young people were asking, "Is this really all my life is good for? Is this really all I am – a paycheck?" A job training program became an opportunity to share about Jesus Christ who died and rose again because every one of us is created in the image of God and worth the very life and breath of the King of Kings whose dedicated his power and mercy to the promise that if the birds of the air and the flowers of the field are taken care, how much more does our Heavenly Father value us?
- b. They learned what the apostle Paul learned: even though we have an idea of where we want to go and what we want to do, sometimes proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ calls us to the unknown peoples and the unexpected places.

VII. Take out one of those pieces of paper from the baskets.

- a. God's work in the world is still unfolding before us. Something is happening, and it is ok if we don't know right this second what it is. "The best laid plans of mice and men" need not be a note of warning; it could be an invitation to the new and the unexpected.
- b. The mission of God does not stop at Melrose and it does not stop with us. There are new churches to start, new people being called to ministry and to the mission field. How do you want to ask God to bless these new churches, new ministers, new missionaries? Write your blessing on the sheet of paper.

MUSIC SELECTIONS

The Family of God; Let Your Heart Be Broken; We Are Called to Be God's People; Breathe; Come, All Christians, Be Committed

WEEK 7:

THE CREATIVE HEART OF GOD



HEART FOR THE
NOT YET

SCRIPTURE

John 1:1-18

SERMON OUTLINE

- I. Sitting on my bookshelf is Jurgen Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. The book is Moltmann's exploration of the Trinity, the basic Christian belief in one God in three persons – Father, Son, Holy Spirit. It is over 200 pages in length with an additional 30 pages of footnotes in very small print. Moltmann not only develops his own perspectives on what it means to talk about a triune God, he also reviews the Scriptural witness and the thousands of years of theological writings and reflections that his book adds to. Interestingly enough, Moltmann begins his book by asking the question, "Does belief in the Trinity not make the religious life even more difficult, and quite unnecessarily?"
 - a. This is a shamrock. I imagine we all saw a lot of these this past week as we celebrated St. Patrick's Day. The reason why the shamrock is associated with St. Patrick is because he used this small plant to explain the Trinity to the pagans in Ireland.
 - b. If you were to ask me to offer you an explanation of the Trinity, which would you rather I give you as an answer: a 200+ page deep academic reflection on Scripture and the history of theology, or a small three-leafed plant?
 - i. The shamrock is not a perfect or complete explanation of what it means to worship God in three persons, blessed Trinity. Yet its simple reality lays a foundation upon which we can begin to imagine the more complex realities of faith.
- II. When you read the opening to John's gospel, we are confronted with this amazing idea: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."
 - a. Word = Logos. What is this? It is a reality, a being that seems to define definition.
 - b. How can this Word be with God but also be God?
- III. But then John extends to us his own shamrock, if you will. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."
 - a. In this moment, the whole purpose of the gospel is laid out before us. We are about to be told the story of the Word that became flesh, not merely for the purpose

WEEK 7: THE CREATIVE HEART OF GOD

of writing a biography. Instead, as we come into contact with this Jesus - who grew up in Galilee next to our grandfather and who some of the people in the church remember seeing and hearing – we encounter the Word, we encounter God. Maybe we can't imagine the unimaginable, but we can see and hear the person and life of Jesus and through Him begin to imagine and understand the glory of God.

- IV. The opening of John's gospel not only establishes a foundation for how we are to hear the story of Jesus, it also puts forward one very important reminder that we still need to today: our God is not only Creator, He is creative.
- a. How He reveals Himself to the world
 - i. A smoking fire pot to Abraham – Genesis 15:17
 - ii. A whirlwind to Job – Job 38:1
 - iii. A man born in Bethlehem and raised in Galilee by a carpenter and his wife
 - b. How He speaks to the world
 - i. A talking donkey – Numbers 22:28
 - ii. The prophets of the Old Testament
 - iii. Jesus' sermons, parables, miracles, presence
 - c. When you read the gospels, but especially the gospel of John, the thing you realize is that the reason why the Pharisees and the scribes and others could not recognize Jesus for who He is, accept what He did, is because they were looking for God in the way they believed God had always shown up and spoken. They forgot that God rarely ever shows up the same way twice! They could not imagine Creator God as creative.
 - i. Nowhere does this appear most clearly than in the book of Revelation. A different John from the gospel writer has a vision from God that He writes down for the churches. For thousands of years, Christians have sought to understand the meaning of the numbers and the colors and the images. People talk about how complicated the book is. But maybe the reason why it is complicated is because we are trying to read it like we would read a theological book written by Jurgen Moltmann when we need to approach it with the imagination that St. Patrick had when he held up a three-leaf clover and said, "This is what the Trinity is like." Perhaps we need the eye of the artist to best understand the creativity of God revealed in Revelation.
- V. Our God is Creator, and our God is creative. When you can make the mountains tremble and the bright sky turn dark, and you decide, "The best way for the world to understand my glory, my power, my character, is to take on flesh and live among them like one of them," that is creative. If our God has that kind of imagination, then shouldn't we dare to imagine with Him.
- a. Dare to imagine new ways of sharing the good news of salvation
 - b. Dare to imagine new opportunities to invite the world to a relationship with their Savior and Creator

WEEK 7: THE CREATIVE HEART OF GOD

- c. Dare to imagine new ways of talking with God, worshipping with God, being present with God.
 - d. The poster of all the different names for God in the Bible. It seems God never stops looking for ways to be known. We should not stop looking for ways to make Him known.
- VI. Take a sheet of paper from the basket. This morning, for our final Praying for the Not Yet, we are going to engage in an act of what is called holy reading.
- a. Listen to John 1:1-18. What one word or phrase captures your hope for the next generation of Christ followers at Melrose Baptist Church and around the world? Write that word or phrase on your sheet of paper.

MUSIC SELECTIONS

Creator God, Creating Still; The Family of God; Something Beautiful; Let Your Heart Be Broken; Morning Has Broken; Change My Heart, O God

ART *for the* NOT YET

Art Concepts due
August 31

Final Works due
October 1

A Call for Poetry, Music,
Stories, Spoken Word,
Visual Art, Sculpture,
and Digital Media



Lend your creativity to Art for the Not Yet—a collaborative arts project celebrating the creative heartbeat of the Church!

What We're Looking For

- Reflect BGAV's 2026 Annual Meeting theme, *Heart for the Not Yet*—exploring God's compassion for people, places, and possibilities still waiting to be reached
- Express creativity through the artistic format of your choosing
- Uplift, challenge, and inspire the Church toward mission, imagination, and hope
- Are suitable for print, projection, or physical display in a gallery or digital format at the 2026 Annual Meeting as well as in other BGAV communication channels



BGAV.org/ArtForNotYet

VISIT THE ART FOR THE NOT
YET WEBPAGE TO ACCESS:

PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES
FOR USE IN YOUR CHURCH
AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

CREATIVE PROMPTS FOR
ADULTS AND CHILDREN

CHURCH HELP ON
HOSTING OR PARTICIPATING
IN A CREATIVE WORKSHOP

SUBMISSION DETAILS