

Title: "Living Faith in 3D"

Text: Ephesians 3:14-20, 4:4-6

The Apostle Paul writes that he wants God's people everywhere, ("all the saints," he says)
-to grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is.

My friends, this language that the Apostle Paul is using here is "spatial" language...dimensional language...

-3 dimensional language.

-He prays we will know how wide and long and high and deep the love of God is. (Use your arms to mark them out)

-Can you do that with me?

-Get those arms up, and try not to whack your neighbor in the nose, but stretch them out wide. Say, "How wide."

-Then front to back, "How long."

-Now top to bottom. "How high and deep."

-Try it again: "How wide, and long, and high and deep."

That is 3D language: width, length, height/depth.

And when Paul prays we will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God, that is "volume" he is talking about,

-like filling up a bathtub with water, right to the rim of the tub.

-Again, volume is a cubic measurement, it's 3D.

And when Paul writes that God is over all and in all and through all, that is 3D spatial language, too!

And Paul's prayer is that God's people might somehow grasp the love of God in all its dimensions,

-and live out a life of faith in all its dimensions.

My friends, this is what I am inviting us to explore together this Fall in a new series of sermons called, "Living Faith in 3D."

-We are going to be exploring:

-what it means to have a "living faith" that actually experiences the love of God in all its fullness;

-and what it means to live out that faith in 3 dimensions: Upward, Inward, and Outward.

Now let me begin today by giving you little foretaste of some of what we will be exploring,
-and then let me conclude today by telling you why we are doing this as a community of faith,
-and why it actually matters to me personally.

1. Let me begin the foretaste of things to come with a visual to help you experience the big idea of what I am talking about when I say “Living faith in 3D.”

On the screen you see what is called a topographical map.
-It is actually a topographical map of Yosemite Valley in northern California.

It is 2 dimensional graphic depiction of the landscape of the park.
-The green color depicts where there are trees and foliage.
-The browns and gray colors depict rock faces and ledges.
-There is a thin blue line running through the middle that depicts the Merced River that runs through the valley.
-There are also little black dots that show the village and lodges, and black lines that depict little roads.
-And there are a whole bunch of brown lines that show contours and elevations.

And everything on this topographical map is true.
-It is a very accurate 2 dimensional depiction of Yosemite National Park.
-But here’s the thing: you see this orange circle over here on the map?
-If you were actually standing at that point in the Yosemite National Park, here is what you would see.

You would see the fullness of the park in 3D.
-Everything on the 2D topographical map might be accurate and true,
-but there “something more” to the reality of the valley than the topographical map can show, isn’t there?

The “something more” is the experience of the length and width and height and depth of valley.

-It's the richness of the blue sky and the clouds,
and the light of the sun
It's the amazing contrasts of the green foliage with the gray
and white rocky cliffs.

The "something more" is the sheer majesty of the 3
dimensional whole!

And you know what? This photograph can't really do it justice
either.

-This photo is also 2 dimensional.
-It gives us a sense of the 3 dimensional whole, but we are
sitting in pews in a church building 3000 miles away from
Yosemite.

We are not there experiencing the park in all it's glorious
dimensions.

-We don't feel the breeze, and smell the scent of the pines
and hear the rush of water over rocks in the river.
-But if you went there, you could stand on that very spot
and experience all the dimensions for yourself,
-and maybe not ever want to go home again.

My friends, most of us live our faith lives in 2 dimensions.

-Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin in the Garden of
Eden,
-our ability to experience the fullness of God, and the
beauty of creation, and our own place in this universe as
the sons and daughters of God, has been broken.

It's like we went from this (photo of Yosemite) to this
(topographical map).

-We can know truths about God, but we have a hard time
actually knowing and experiencing God.
-We can know a good many things about ourselves,
-but we have a hard time being ourselves and living with
ourselves, and sharing our true selves with others.
-We can know a good bit about others and about the world
around us,
-and about history, and math, and science, and computers,
and language, and art,

- but we have a hard time knowing how to live with others,
and how to live in this world without wrecking it,
-and how to take our great learning and live wisely.

It's like living our lives in two dimensions, knowing somehow that there is more to this life than we are experiencing,
-but not knowing how to tap into it.
-We can't figure out how to move from this (topographical) to this (photo).

We feel flat, but there's a longing in us to feel full.
-One Christian man said, "I've been a Christian for 22 years,
but instead of being a 22 year old Christian,
-I feel like I've been a 1 year old Christian 22 times.

You see, there's this sense that even our faith lives are "long and shallow" but not "wide and long and high and deep."

But Paul's prayer for us all is that we might grasp how wide
-and long and high and deep the love of Christ is for us,
-and know this love that surpasses knowledge,
-so that we might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

He is praying for us a life that would be deep and rich and full because of all that Christ has done for us in overcoming the effects of the fall into sin that broke us.

- Paul himself had experienced this transformation from a 2 dimensional life to a 3 dimensional life,
-when the risen Jesus appeared to him in a vision on the road to Damascus
-and opened his eyes to the reality of who He is.

Paul suddenly knew there was more to this life, and more to the reality of God than he had ever known before.
-It changed his life and opened him up to a new way of living, "a 3D kind of living."
-Experiencing the love of God in Christ in all its dimensions
-and then responding to that love in all our dimensions:
-upwardly, by loving God back with all his heart and mind and soul and strength,

-inwardly, by learning to love ourselves and love others,
-and outwardly, by going into all the world to make
disciples who would do the same.

That's living faith in 3D.

In Jesus, we can actually move from 2 dimensional life to 3
dimensional life.

-And my friends, it is simply a restoration of the way God
originally created us to be.

For here's the thing:

-We are going to explore this Fall that God Himself is 3
dimensional: He is the triune God who is Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit.

-And when God created all things in the beginning, he created
them like this (Yosemite Photo): multi-dimensional.

-And when God created human beings, he created us "in His
image" to be multi-dimensional:

-first he created us male and female,

-and then he also created us to be a unified whole person
made up of body, soul, and spirit.

-Multi-dimensional, you see.

And God also created us to be in relationship with Him,

-and called us to respond to His great multi-dimensional love
for us, by loving Him back with all our heart and soul and
mind and strength.

You see, we are to love Him back with all the dimensions of
who we are.

-And then we are called to let that love which is "over us"

-flow in us and through us out into the world around us.

And so those are the dimensions of our faith-life that we will be
exploring together this Fall.

-We will be talking about a faith-life that is "upward, and
inward, and outward."

-All three dimensions.

-And it corresponds with the Great Commandment and the
Great Commission to love God, love others as ourselves,
and make disciples wherever we go in the world around us.

Upward, Inward, Outward. Living faith in 3D.

2. And you know why this is important to me?

Because God has made and wired me to be a person and a pastor who is drawn to the biblical image of salvation as wholeness:

- salvation as a mending of brokenness
- as a healing of wounded-ness
- as a restoration of relationship.

That's what God's redemption has meant to me in my own life,
-that He took something broken and is making me whole again.

And as most of you know, that is what moved me into Christian ministry.

- Having been healed, I was drawn to be a healer for others.
- And it is what ministry here at Forestdale has always been about for me.

And it is what our community of faith here at Forestdale is about.

- I think most everyone of you who has come and found a home here in this family of faith,
 - is here because you found a place where you could bring your brokenness and find some healing.
- You found here a safe environment for opening up your life to others, and taking baby steps to become more whole.
- And you have found, that you too, having experienced a growing healing and wholeness in your life,
 - have been drawn to want to be a healer and mender of others as well.
- It's who we are, isn't it?

There are other excellent churches are around us where the focus is more on evangelism,

- and others where the focus is on teaching a more systematic theology,
- and others where the focus is on social action, and community service,
- and other excellent churches where the focus is on dynamic worship, with full bands, stage lights, and

professional musicians.

But Forestdale has always been more of a hospital for hurting people.

- A community where the focus is on the grace of God, who loves and forgives and accepts us in Christ,
- and who is inviting us all to walk with him toward greater wholeness and deeper life.

This is who we are as a community of Faith.

- And this sermon series is simply another way to explore the sanctification process that we are already engaged in.
- It's another way to talk about the journey of faith that we are all on together.
- It's another way for us to be who we are, and give ourselves anew to the mending project that God is working in us by His Spirit.

This year we will simply look at our growth in grace and in wholeness in spatial terms of moving from 2 dimensional life into 3 dimensional life.

- Moving from this (topographical), to this (Photo).

Will you join me (with arms extended) as we seek together with all the saints to grasp "how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge"?

Let's pray.