

**In Awe of the Ordinary**  
**A Sermon by David Story**  
**The First Baptist Church**  
**July 17, 2011**

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**Several years ago-1980's almost 30 years ago now, when I was much younger, and not grey, and in much better physical shape, I did some things. Some pretty amazing things. When I look at the pictures, now, I am still pretty impressed. I began in 1984, taking a group of teenage boys from my church on a weeklong hiking trip to the Appalachian Trail in North Carolina and Virginia. It was an entire week with a 60 lb back pack, walking in sun and rain. Sometimes it was total misery....dog tired....wet....cold. There was no TV, No I-tunes and no Radio....TOTAL MISERY.**

**But when I think of those times now, they made me a better person in many ways. Sure it made me stronger, healthier....skinnier. But other parts of me were affected too.**

**It caused me to appreciate things that I otherwise would have overlooked completely, like this one, for instance. One day we had awakened at sunrise, made breakfast, cleaned up and left the camp site as though we had never been there. We hiked for four hours and were finally resting under the shade eating lunch...trail mix and water.**

**Kendall Cameron, one of the guides, spoke up, "WOW that is amazing. So amazing!" "What" I asked. " he continued, "That fern next to you." I shrugged. "No you don't understand. That variety fern is only seen on the Appalachian Trail high in this part of Mt Rogers, VA. It doesn't grow anywhere else. AS I listened to Kendall's eloquent description of the ferns of the Appalachian Trail, I became a believer. I learned later that there are 12000 known varieties of fern in the world. Many are edible like the fiddle head fern that grows so plentifully in New England and that you pay so dearly for in a Boston**

**restaurant. That day I thought that the Creator had placed that fern there just for me, much in the same way the Gold trees are there in Fall because I can't see the Red ones. Many of you know that I am red/green color blind. But never the less, on that day I was totally blown away with the Creation that was around me. You might say, I was blind but now I can see. This sermon saw its birth as I was driving through the Vermont Green Mountains. You know...a different spectacular view around every bend.**

**Another Creation teacher was found in California, as we were driving through wine country, doing all the typical touristy things, there was sign marked "Old Growth Forest". We parked and walked into this "cathedral" of trees. We spent three hours in that strangely quiet forest. People were even speaking in whispers in the presence of Redwoods that were 1000's of years old. It was a Holy place.**

**There is an Exodus story,<sup>1</sup> that tells us that one day Moses was seeking direction from God. He had ascended Mt. Horeb and on this mountain the shepherd saw a bush burning but not consumed. It was here that Moses got his marching orders....from a burning bush. It was probably a bush like 1000's of others on the mountain but the miracle is that Moses stopped to pay attention. He recognized the Holy that was present there. He listened.**

**It is easy to see Creation's majesty in the Green Mountains or a Redwood forest but what about here...right now. As you look to the right or left can you see the Holy in that person?**

**My family of origin was poor or so I thought. We were farmers and grew everything we ate. We only bought grocery items that we could not grow or make. So it was quite a deal when a really poor family moved into the neighborhood. We started picking up the Hampton kids to go to Vacation Bible School. The girls, Pixie and Dixie, wore dresses made of flour sacks with sandals and the boy wore**

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:1-6

**clothes covered in patches. Later we saw that the parents were dressed the same way. The father had two pair of bib overalls, one for work and one for church. So he would clean up his brogans and he was ready for church. The Hamptons were poor. I recall the first day they ate Sunday dinner at our house. They looked at that simple meal as though it were a feast.**

**But my mother taught us boys to look past their clothes and see that they were as much creation of God as anyone else. We learned that although the father was not educated and couldn't read, he was smart. He knew that Bible and could teach the stories of Jesus as well as anyone. I can still remember his voice as he prayed. He would get on his knees and pray to God as if no one else was around. Some of the wealthier people in the church didn't like him doing anything public but my mother always included them in every meeting. I learned to see the Holy in people who looked different from me.**

**The story is told of a man who visited an orphanage. All the kids were playing except one who retreated to the back ground. He noticed that this kid had a large dark birthmark type scar right in the middle of her forehead. To make sure she was included, he picked her up and as he hugged her, kissed her right on the part that others saw as ugly. He saw the value of this part of God's creation. He saw her as Holy.**

**I want to suggest to you that every day and every step of life can be a burning bush experience if we will stop long enough to see the marvels of creation, or experience the joy on a person's face as we kiss a scar; or as we revel in the beauty of another person who may look different from us or dress differently**

**No need to ask, "What Would Jesus Do?". We already know what he would do. He would do the unexpected, go against tradition and more than likely would do the opposite of the organized church. The question is "What will I do?" when I am confronted with the ordinary**

**but HOLY things in life. First Baptist has already made a step in that direction in the Inclusion Statement penned some years ago; because to see that all persons have value is to see them as Holy Creations of God.**

**I have lifted four lines from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem *Aurora Leigh*.**

**“Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush is on fire with God; but only he who sees, takes off his shoes. The rest sit round and pluck blackberries.”<sup>2</sup>**

**Amen!**

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<sup>2</sup> “Aurora Leigh” Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1857.