

Podcast 112: Nature, Part 2

This is the second part of a multi-part series on nature where Denver discusses some of the many ways that things in nature point to Christ.

DENVER: Every one of us— If I say the word *perfection*, every one of us have something that comes to mind. In the course of your life, my guess is that every one of you have had moments that you could point to and say, “That moment was absolutely perfect. There’s nothing about it that I would have changed.”

When you ride a motorcycle, roads have a design that is, for safety reasons, capable of handling traffic at speeds that are called the *design speed*, which means that a vehicle can operate up to that design speed on that road safely. But the speed limit is **never** the design speed because they build in this margin of safety. So, they tell you to drive five or ten or fifteen miles below the design speed of the road so that there’s a margin of safety built into it. ☐

If you’re riding a motorcycle on a road, particularly a rural, winding road (like Idaho 5 that goes from the Montana border to the Washington border), and you go the posted speed limit, the motorcycle does not cooperate with you. It doesn’t like that speed; it’s hard to handle. But if you speed up, where the motorcycle and the road and you are in syncopation with one another, and you’re riding at the design speed, everything is easier. In fact, it is almost **thoughtless** as you go—the rhythm of the road, the design of the road, the pace the motorcycle is at—everything about that.

On Idaho 5, there are places where the *banking* (they call it *super elevation*) of the road is 25 or **30** miles an hour **above** the posted speed limit. We were returning from the Black Hills of South Dakota, coming through northern Idaho on Idaho 5, going the design speed. It was a moment of absolute perfection when the joy of the experience, the feel of the humidity, the pace of the road— Everything about that moment was perfect until it was interrupted by an Idaho State patrolman [audience laughter] who, fortunately, was pointed in the opposite direction as we went by at the design speed of the road. Well, he had a lot of recovery to do to reorient himself and to start from zero to get where we were. ☐

And we happened into, fortunately, a little village and went a block off the road, found a gas station, hopped off. And there was a fellow there who owned—he owned a Moto Guzzi, which, in northern Idaho, it’s a pretty rare motorcycle to be driving. It’s a V-twin, but unlike a Harley Davidson, which is an inline V-twin with a front and a back, this one has V’s that go out either side. It’s still a V. It’s not like a BMW (that’s a Boxster, horizontally opposed). And so, we acted like we’d been there all week. And the police came through making their noise, and they went on their (happily) way. And he said, “They looking for you [audience laughter]?” We said, “That’s possible [audience laughter], but...”

There are moments where, because you can't be planning next week or regretting last month, you can't be doing anything other than that moment. If you're on the bike, and your mind is elsewhere, and you're going the design speed, and your mind is elsewhere, you can kill yourself, or you can badly injure yourself. You can do extraordinarily stupid, haphazard, dangerous things if you're not absolutely in the moment. ☐

Perfection is one of those things which occurs **absolutely** in the moment. Think back over your lifetime in those moments where you would not change a thing. You were so content. There was nothing else that you could want or you would change about that moment.

There's a character, a samurai, that an American struggled to try and understand in the movie *The Last Samurai*. And although they grew to have this friendship with one another, ~~Kamatsu~~ was always—Katsumoto—was always looking for the perfect cherry blossom. He would study the cherry tree as it blossomed in the Spring at his (outside), his own temple, always looking for the perfect cherry blossom and never finding. There was always a problem with it. Well, as he lay dying on the battlefield at the end of his life (one of his last breaths), he's looking up, and he's seeing in the distance the cherry trees blooming, and he observes, "Perfect. They are **all** perfect." And it didn't matter what flaws they had. The fact is, they were all perfect.

I can remember—sometime. The scene presents itself vividly in my mind. I can't tell you how old I was or what grade I was in, but during recess, playing marbles with friends—and recess may be 15 minutes? But it was timeless! Out playing marbles with a friend in the dirt with your marble, all eternity could come and go in that moment of such profound contentment.

I have dogs. And dogs are **always** content, and we're told that dogs do not have any sense of time. They may live only 10 to 12 years, but as far as they're concerned, they've lived for all eternity because there's a timelessness to the experience of being a dog. They're not in a hurry to get somewhere unless, of course, you've got the leash, and you're gonna take them out, in which event they'll anticipate that moment. But there's a **timelessness** to the idea of perfection.

I can recall an afternoon. I had come out of my house, and I was sitting on the front porch, and I was all alone. The temperature that day must have been **exactly** the same temperature as the temperature of my skin so that I could not tell where outside of me and inside of me began and ended by feeling the breeze. The temperature was exactly the same temperature as I felt. And it was so calm an afternoon, so calm a moment sitting there that I was taken in by the moment itself. A bird flew by, and I could feel the movement of the bird's wings through the vibration of the air because it was **just that calm**. I thought as I sat there, "This **is** Heaven." **This**, this moment, this experience—**this is** Heaven because it, at that moment, was perfect, something that I would not change.

I was out walking, and I came upon this songbird that was just singing the happiest little tune you could ever imagine. I don't know what kind of bird it was, but it was, you know,

sparrow-size and small and very happy and singing its tune and doing all that God endowed it to do. And I came upon it abruptly. And because of where it had situated itself and because of where I came upon it from, it was trapped. And it was singing loudly. And when I got there, it was so loud and so startling that I stopped and looked at it, and it **immediately** stopped singing. And it knew (it was like the bird realized) if I wanted to, I could capture it; if I wanted to, I could kill it; if I wanted to, I could exercise whatever control I wanted over the bird. And it **looked** frightened, less than an arm's length away. (Foolish to let a human get that close to you in that vulnerable a spot.) And the stopping of the singing was so abrupt. It's like the last note still hung in the air as this frightened little creature looked at me. ☒

And I thought, "Hey, I'm harmless, but it doesn't know that. So, what's the best way to communicate to this trapped little animal that I'm harmless?" I turned, and I walked away, and I tried to whistle a little like what the bird had been whistling like—miserable imitation. I mean, it was probably *screeching* to that poor thing, but I whistled as I'm walking away. And within a few steps (if there's any way to describe it), I would say that the bird's tune resumed on a happier note than it had been before. That was a moment that was perfect.

I'm sure every one of you have had moments in your life that you can point to and recall and say, "That moment; that incident; that—that was perfect." If we can conceive of perfection, or if we can **experience** it even for just a moment, that means perfection exists. It's real. It's attainable. It can be had even in this place and even with you and even with me. Perfection **is** possible.

In this creation, there are two opposing forces that cause everything there is to be and to exist. Those two opposing forces are not good and evil, although we tend to **call** them good and **call** them evil. The two opposing forces are, in fact, *love* and *fear*. Everything that is *generative* or *creative* comes about as a consequence of love. If you think about **all** the problems that people have with one another and what would solve them, the one thing that could solve **every** problem is love—if we loved one another enough. And **all** of those vices, all of the suffering—the anger, the pride, the envy, the impatience, the greed—have their root in fear: I fear I will not have enough, and therefore, I envy; I fear for my own inability, and therefore, I resent your ability. Everything that produces negativity comes about as a consequence of fear.

When it comes to signs, faith does not get produced by signs. So, you can't do that. That's why Pharaoh never got impressed. Signs are inconsequential. Whatever the sign is, it was like Brother Pratt was explaining: So what? Bad weather happens all the time. The plagues are still going on in Egypt. The remarkable nature of the sign is that it happened on cue, not that a sign happened. ☒

I'm having a conversation with a fellow. It involves a true gospel principle. We're standing in the back parking lot of my office. While we're finishing the conversation, I say, "Do you see the dove sitting atop the pole in the distance?" And when he saw the dove, it took off. It

flew clockwise one circle around us, and it landed back on the pole. To him, it was a sign. To **me**, it was a sign. If it was a crow, and it went counterclockwise, I'd probably say, "Hey, there's something wrong with you [audience laughter]! But the Lord told me I'd be okay, but I'm pretty sure [audience laughter]..." ☞

Signs are not controlled [laughs] by men but are God's to give as God determines. And signs are not supposed to be the subject of boasting. Some of the most remarkable signs that've been given to me are silently recorded in my journal but are astonishing. Signs exist. Many of the signs recorded in the lives of believers may be unknown to you, but, nevertheless, there are signs in rich abundance among believers today. ☞

The adulterers are the ones who seek signs, according to our Lord, and He said it twice. We know He said it twice because Matthew's account includes Him saying that to two different audiences on two different occasions. Adulterers are sign-seekers.

I would include within the definition of the adulterous, as did the Lord, those who commit adultery in their heart; hence, the need to reject polygamy by men [audience applause]. It is adultery in your heart to continue to entertain the possibility that you will one day have 72 virgins or whatever the hell it is that you have going in your skull. Just get rid of that crap. It does not belong in the life of a meek and a humble man—doesn't belong there.

People are very different, one from another. Not only are men and women different from one another, women are different from each other, and men are different from each other; and personalities are **always** going to be ill-fitted. Getting people to mesh together?—That's not going to result in, somehow, this universal similarity of personality. It's important that people preserve their differences. It's important that people have the gifts that have been given to them by God preserved intact and not suppressed because someone doesn't like the way that their gift gets expressed.

I've mentioned it before. I just find the artwork that Monet does, with his version of impressionism, the highest and greatest use of the paintbrush. But I think Van Gogh's impressionism is crude and elementary; and quite frankly, I mean, his suicide stopped the outpouring of that stuff. And in some ways, you know, maybe the art world was benefited by that [audience laughter]. When he was a realist in the early stages, some of what Van Gogh did was rather lovely, but his impressionism... I see that, and when my wife substitutes in 4th grade, and she brings presents home from her kids [audience laughter]—But there are people who **love** Van Gogh. "Sunflowers" sold for 44 million last time it sold. Some people really love Van Gogh! I assume that in the resurrection, they'll figure out that they were duped [audience laughter]. But for here and now, in this fallen world with its perverse set of priorities, that's all good and well, and if they've got the money, and they wanna use it that way, that's fine.

Zion is going to have people whose artistic outpouring is going to be **fabulously** different from one another. You look at the totem pole artistry of the Alouettes; and you look at the carved artistry of the Hawaiian Islands; and you look at the sculpture of Michelangelo—and

these are radically, radically different one from the other, so much so that you're bridging these enormous cultural divides to look at these different kinds of sculpture. Why would we ever want to have a studied school of artistic discipline that produces nothing more than some uniform product when beauty and artistry can find so many unique forms of expression? Why would we ever want that?

Why would you want to go to a fellowship meeting in Uganda, a fellowship meeting in the Philippines, and a fellowship meeting in Spain and hear the same lesson on the same Sunday everywhere throughout the world? That is managerial overkill designed to destroy the unique spirits of the sons and daughters of God [audience applause].

Facial recognition technology works because no one wears your face but you! Fingerprints distinguish every one of us from one another so much so that if you leave a print, and everyone else leaves a print, we can distinguish yours from everyone else. Every single snowflake crystal is unique. Every leaf of every tree is unique. Nature cries out that God treasures the differences that exist from one soul to the next. And when describing the gifts that are given, the gifts are very different, but how the gifts manifest themselves, even if someone possesses exactly the same gift...

Read the description of the seership of Enoch and the description of the seer Joseph; and the way in which they manifest themselves were **decidedly** different. Even the gifts do not come out the same when put through one person and then put through another. Every one of you are unique, and when we deal with one another, the objective is not to compel you to be me. The objective is not to compel any one of us to be the same as another one of us. The objective is to rejoice and to respect and to hallow the work that God has done in making us so unique from one another. ☐

Even twins are dissimilar. My father was a twin. There's a picture of him and his twin brother in their high school class. (I think there were 12 kids in their class.) The way in which my father was dressed and the way in which his twin brother was dressed in the picture foreshadowed the course that these two men's lives would take.

My father left that area in rural Appalachia, and he went into the military. He fought in World War II. He landed on Omaha Beach on the morning of D-Day. He settled in the West.

He worked his life to support his children, encouraging my sister and I to go to college to receive an education that he did not receive because by the time he had an opportunity to do that, life and family and work prevented it. (My sister holds two Bachelor's degrees, a Master's degree, and I've got an Associates, Bachelor's, and Juris Doctorate degree.) Because of the priorities that my father had, he was willing to work for the **long** game, the **long** vision—to sacrifice.

His twin brother looks rather dandy. He outdressed his twin. He was somewhat showy. He wanted to get there and get there now and quickly. And so, when he finished school, he immediately went to the best-paying job he could find; and he went to work in the coal

mine where the United Mine Workers Union wages paid him a great living. He never left Appalachia, developed black lung as a coal miner—which they often did. But he had gratification early on that my father did not have; but my father had satisfaction that his twin brother never had for himself. Twins are dissimilar. (And they were identical twins; they were not fraternal.)

We're unique, and we're meant to be so. We dishonor God when we disrespect that and when we insist on uniformity. However different we may be from one another, however, we can still be kindly. We can still be patient. We can still try to uplift, to edify, and to **honor** the differences that exist between us.

The Lord, when He lets you know you're wrong, lets you know in a way that's like [pause] our dog Mowgli. She cannot bear to displease her family. She just wears it on her. Everything about her—the ears, the tail—everything about our dog droops when she has familial ire directed her way. That's how you feel when the Lord is letting you know that you've offended Him. And I've offended Him far too many times for me to even recount. Sometimes I wonder why I'm still involved. I assume at some point, He's just gonna get tired, and I'm gonna ignite like a match head, and He's gonna say, "Well, he probably had that coming."

The Lord is real. He is working. The time is short. The evidence of what is going to happen and is presently underway is not just in scripture; it's also in nature. The evidence of this is written everywhere. And if some of you are lucky enough to be able to hang out for a six o'clock fireside with John Pratt, try to keep him here long enough to let the stars come out [illegible]. And then, he'll need a laser pointer; and then, he'll really entertain you.

Oh, I love this question: Share some more of the ways that nature testifies of Christ.

I hope you garden. If you don't, you should garden in order to experience all the plagues of Egypt because that's what happens [audience laughter] whenever I attempt to garden. ☒

There are these loathsome pests that will come along and consume and destroy and invade your garden. They'll eat everything except zucchini, as it turns out [audience laughter]. And zucchini produces in such abundance (and so quickly) and ripens so quickly that all you're left with is a bag of seeds, and they're dreadful.

But there is a pest that invades the garden that will eat everything and destroy and wreak havoc that eventually entombs itself in a chrysalis. And the pest, while it's inside this apparent self-made tomb, has died and gone away. But eventually, it will arise from that cocoon, from that tomb, and it will come out, and it has assumed a wholly different form. Unlike that loathsome creature that crawled around (ugly and haltingly) across your garden, consuming and destroying, once it emerges from the tomb, it now takes flight. It's joined with the sky, with the heavens itself. And it goes about thereafter taking pollen and fertilizing the garden and becoming productive. Where before it had destroyed, now it helps create. Now it becomes an agent that produces fruit, that produces vegetables. ☒

This little insect is a powerful sermon embedded in nature to testify of who Christ was and, more importantly, to testify of what Christ did that will affect **you**, that will turn **you** from what we are now into something glorious, heavenly, and capable of ascending in flight up on high.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #7, given in Boise, Idaho on November 3, 2018;
- His conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night" given in St. George, Utah on March 19, 2017;
- His conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents" given in Gilbert, Arizona on March 25, 2018;
- His comments at the "Unity in Christ" conference in Utah County, Utah on July 30, 2017; and
- The Q&A Session following Denver's conference talk given in Grand Junction, Colorado on April 21, 2019.