**Visions of God**

**The Word**

Read Together Ezekiel 1

**The Big Picture**

In the place of exile and discouragement, God revealed himself to Ezekiel as the holy and sovereign ruler of the universe. In today’s culture where we are tempted to “tame” God and make him conform to our contemporary sensibilities, it’s important that we are reminded of the wildness of our God who is the King of all creation and is free to do and be whatever he wishes.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. It was argued on Sunday that the American church has tamed and domesticated God in an attempt to make him more palatable to our contemporary sensibilities, and as a result the church has grown bored with the God it has created. What would you want to add to, push against, or clarify in that conversation?

2. What specific aspect of Ezekiel’s vision was most compelling or meaningful to you and why?

3. Consider the prayer of Moses mentioned at the end of the sermon: “God, show me your glory.” As you look ahead to this new year, where are you hoping to get a fresh glimpse of God’s glory and power? (For example, there might be a current challenge you’re hoping to experience God in, or there might be a boredom in your life with God you’re hoping God will change, or there might be a particular quality of God you’re hoping to understand more deeply, etc.).

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. The context of Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel and his fellow Jews are living in exile in Babylon in 593BC, five years after King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem and carried some of the Jews into Babylonian captivity

2. Israel had experienced hundreds of years of unfaithfulness and disobedience and the exile was God’s promised punishment for continued disobedience

3. They were left wondering where God was and where to go from here, and they needed a fresh vision of God

B. Our contemporary context

1. We have lost our vision of a wild and awesome God and have tried to tame him and conform him to our modern sensibilities, but in the process we have grown bored with the God we’ve created.

2. Nobody today seems to think that God is dangerous. And that is itself a dangerous oversight. It’s dangerous because before we yawn at God, we must first replace the majestic, holy, awesome Tiger of Scripture with a domesticated kitten, conformed to the standards of the world, measured by the yardstick of political correctness. Who wants a God who roars, who threatens, who judges? Why not rather fashion a god in our taste — a friendly god we can pet, leash, and export for popular appeal?” (From Tony Reinke’s *Yawning at Tigers*)

3. Our boredom with God shows up in our lack of worship, purity, and mission

4. We need a fresh vision of a God who isn’t tame or safe but is good.

II. The Passage

A. The storm cloud

1. God often shows up in a storm (see Exodus 19 and Job 38)

2. A storm communicates power, transcendence, unpredictability, wildness

3. The storm leaves you wondering whether God is coming to bring judgment or salvation (the answer will be both)

B. The four living creatures

1. 4 wings that move like the sound of rushing waters

2. 4 faces (man, lion, ox, eagle) that are the kings of their respective realms

3. Fire and lightning shooting back and forth between them

4. Unrestricted and rapid movement

5. These are cherubim. Consider how much we have domesticated cherubs in our modern art

C. God himself

1. An expanse high above the four living creatures (v. 22)

2. A throne (v. 26) that communicates his authority and power and the fact that he is in complete control of all that is happening (they needed to be reminded of that)

3. Fire (v. 27) that communicates his purity and his purifying presence. He is coming to refine and purify his people, and it will not be a pleasant experience but it will be an ultimately redemptive one

4. God’s beauty in the rainbow and its radiance. God is not just holy and sovereign; he is beautiful. His qualities are beautiful (love, justice, wisdom, holiness), but it is an “awe-ful” beauty that leaves you feeling very small.

D. The conclusion of the vision

1. What Ezekiel saw was the glory of God twice removed: “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God” (v. 28)

2. He falls face down in awe and worship (v. 28)

III. Conclusion

A. Let’s remember that God has not changed and this is still who he is

1. Sometimes we think the wild and holy God of the Old Testament has softened over time.

2. The coming of Jesus does fundamentally change who God is. The coming of Jesus explains how fallen creatures like us can have a relationship with this holy and wild God

B. May our prayer at the beginning of this year be the prayer of Moses: “Lord, show me your glory.”

1. God can reveal his glory anywhere: in the mundane, in the exciting, in the joyful, and in the painful

2. May he reveal himself to us this year that we might be changed by him

Show me! Changing diapers, at this desk 9-5, taking care of my parents