

“World-Changing Ideas”

Isaiah 42:1-9, Acts 10:34-43, January 8, 2017

Pinehurst Congregational Church

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In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

(Genesis 1:1-4). Whether you believe that God created the world as told verbatim in Genesis, or whether you believe that God was the Spiritual and Creative Force that brought about the Big Bang followed by the evolution of all species, doesn't matter to me as a Christian. What matters for the purpose of my sermon are questions like this: How long had God pondered this idea of creating life before bringing it to fruition? Did the idea just come to Him or did it haunt him for some time? And what sparked his imagination to begin the creative process? Whatever the evolution of

God's colossal idea, it changed what was, by creating what is - the world!

Later, God had a second out-of-the-box idea that changed the world dramatically by upending biological creation as we know it: *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God...to a virgin...The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. (Luke 1:26-31)...for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21).* I wonder: How did God come upon the idea of impregnating a lowly virgin to be the mother of His son? How long before the prophets were informed of this incredulous idea, did God mull over sending a Savior to earth?

And then, as we just read this morning, God had another idea way beyond the expectations of the Hebrew priests as voiced by the disciple Peter: *"I truly understand that God shows **no partiality**...Jesus Christ: He is Lord **of All**.* (Acts 10:34, 36b). More important to the world than Jesus

as a Redeemer of the sins of Jews alone, was the message that He would be a Savior for EVERYONE. God's Kingdom will be an inclusive Realm, welcoming of diverse ethnicities, gender orientations, nationalities, income levels, and age! Moreover, all would have to direct access to God. That exceptional idea changed the world. However, an all-inclusive, and all-connected world-wide family of God proved difficult for those who claimed absolute rights to God by virtue of their religious stature, ancestry, gender or skin color.

Since then, through the tireless workings of Jesus, God initiated more upending ideas like dialoguing with women in public places, welcoming children, breaking restrictive religious laws to treat those in need at the time of their need. which have overturned the known world! Inspired by God's creativity, I share this Independent Publishing award-winning children's book entitled, *What Do You Do With an Idea?* written by Kobi Yamada.

Read Book

Our church and each of us is into a new year. It's time to open up one's self to the new ideas percolating within you...ideas that might not change "The World" but change "Your World" in ways that bring about greater unity, justice, hopefulness or just plain fun! That alleviate depression, insecurities, or lack of initiative. Ideas that solidify friendships, employment opportunities or your relationship with God. The only limit on good ideas are the limits you put on them! "Declare new things!" exclaims the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah invites you, God invites you to embrace and nurture an idea and see where you end up!

Of course, all this conversation leads to my ultimate questions which are: What are your opinions about the character make-up of our church? What are your ideas – different, weird or a little crazy – regarding what the purpose of our church should be? And from where should we draw future friends in order to build up this family of faith? As a Christian community, what do we want to offer people who seek an outlet for their spirituality, and in what ways do we wish to impact our immediate world? For

three consecutive Sunday beginning February 12, we will put these questions to all of you. On those Sundays we will incorporate into our time of worship one of three *Growing Forward* conversations about our church: It's identity; its purpose and its demographic context. Please, please be intentional about being here on these upcoming Sundays so you can offer your ideas into the mix. As a team, let's see where *Growing Forward* leads us! Now that's a stimulating idea! Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

O Lord, we are blessed to have this sacred home where we feel safe and welcome. We are blessed to be a part of a church where ideas can be shared and that the future of our congregation is in our hands and not in the hands of an outside, decision-making, governing body. Creative and Loving Lord, we have important decisions to make. Strengthen the commitment of each of us to be a part of that decision-making process as best we are able. By the power of your Holy Spirit, may we come to imagine a church that merits being called a community of God's people being God's people. Amen.