

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM NATURE'S WORLD
PART XIII

Well sadly we come to the end of what I hope has been an interesting but also helpful series. I have thoroughly enjoyed using these examples from the wonderful world of nature to help and encourage you in your walk with the Lord. I also trust that you have learned some things that will help you in your church life as a believer.

If per chance you have been following this series and you do not know Jesus as your personal savior I offer the following before we start the last of the series.

If you are searching for meaning and hope for your life and for your forever it is as simple as reading, believing, and responding as stated below.

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God. Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them]. Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the _____ day of _____ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: _____

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at lapeerchurch@gmail.com Subject line: (Salvation)

Now lets get going with the last of our examples starting with



Weighing in at between 120-250 lb. we run across one of the more interesting looking creatures of all those we have dealt with and learned from during this little series

(The Warthog)

THE wild warthog is generally peaceful, but he is a fierce-looking African pig that lacks grace and beauty. They are the only pigs able to live in areas without water for several months of the year.

Two large pairs of wart-like bumps on the head account for his name. One pair is below and between the eyes. Smaller pairs of bumps are near the jaw (usually the smaller ones are only on males). Because their eyes are high on his head, the warthog is able to keep a sharp lookout for predators (One of which is the Lion) when he lowers his head to feed on short grass.

Although no warthog could win beauty contest since they seem to lack both personality and countenance, this species is very intelligent and appears to be self-centered to very core. Sort of pictures people don't they? The warthogs social behavior includes manipulation, and the unleashing of a fiery temper instead good judgment. If the situation calls for it, they can be quite charming, however!

A warthog's chief enemies are lions, leopards, and cheetahs. He has an uncanny ability to discern what other animals are up to, and he is master at spotting his opponents' weaknesses. Instead of standing to fight an enemy, he will quickly run away. He often hides in the abandoned den of an armadillo sliding into the den backward, so that he positions himself for the strategic use his tusks to attack a pursuing predator.

The spiritual lessons from the pigpen

From the placement God has given the warthogs eyes, remember to keep alert during your daily activities for the lion who wants to grab you. I Pet. 5:8 says Control yourselves and be careful! The devil is your enemy, and he goes around like a roaring lion looking for someone to attack and eat. The warthog does not stay and fight his enemies but rather runs in fright. We need to run away from spiritual danger just as quickly as the warthog does

From the tusks remember: Don't use our spiritual tusks to attack other believers or dig up dirt on one another just to get what we want or make ourselves look good. When something is forgiven don't dig up the past and use to hurt others with it again. Instead, let's be sure to dig into God's word for strength and direction on how to handle life

From their homely looks let's remember: Don't look on the outside bumps and warts on others because we all have some ourselves. God looks at the heart and we ought to do the same. There is something beautiful in each of us if we will only look beneath the surface

From their social behavior: Let's not forget a very important lesson here. The warthogs social behavior includes manipulation, and the unleashing of a fiery temper instead of good judgment. If the situation calls for it, they can be quite charming, however!

Sadly that is found in the social behavior of many Christians as well. So refuse to manipulate one another just to get what we want but instead trust God who provides everything we need. Remember the promise of Philippians 4:19 *My God will use his glorious riches to give you everything you need. He will do this through Christ Jesus.*

And finally Refuse to lash out in anger when you don't get your way. Remember the cost of anger and that it is not worth it in at least four areas

Cost #1 - To our Health It has been well documented that chronic, high levels of anger are associated with an increased risk for health problems.

Cost #2 - To our Relationships Very few things can damage a relationship as much as the inability to manage one's anger. Frequent and/or intense outbursts, whether verbal or physical, can destroy marriages, break apart families, and ruin friendships.

Cost #3 To our Children The effect on children of witnessing chronic and/or intense anger in the household can be devastating, often more so than the impact of parental divorce.

Cost #4 To our Church Just as anger affects relationships and children it also affects church health, because what happens in families and other relationships also happens in the church, because the church is simply a group of families generally gathered together in one place

So instead being like the warthog whose fierce anger as was just pointed out, lets determine to be like this about him. For the wart hog, if the situation calls for it, they can be quite charming, however.

Lets remember, for the Christian every situation calls for us exhibit the loving and gentle side of the wart hog personality not just to get our way but to keep peace within the church family and the individual families that make up our church family.

Well these were a few thoughts I had as I thought about this ugly yet special creation from the hand of Our special creating God just so we could have yet another object lesson from our visit to God's zoo



The Salmon

Intro: If you have ever watched nature shows I am sure that sometime or other you have seen one on the salmon migration. Today I want to think about the salmon for a few minutes because we can learn some things from them that apply to our lives

Salmon lay their eggs in a "nest" that is called a redd. The female lays between about 3,000-7,000 eggs . Typically, salmon are a nad ro' mus: that is they are born in fresh water, migrate to the ocean, then return to fresh

water to reproduce. However, populations of several species are restricted to fresh water through their lives.

Folklore has it that the fish return to the exact spot where they were born to spawn; tracking studies have shown this to be true, and this homing behavior has been shown to depend on olfactory memory.

Depending on the species, salmon will spend from one to five years in the ocean and travel thousands of miles before returning to their birth stream or (the stream where they were hatched). However, some fish do stray to nearby rivers, colonizing new areas and replenishing weak populations.

The adult salmon become spawners. Most salmon spawn only once during their lifetime and die within a week of spawning. The nutrients from their decomposing bodies help to fertilize the stream. Some steelhead and sea-run cutthroat trout can spawn more than once. After spawning, these adults, called kelts, migrate back to saltwater.

When adults return to spawn, they need unobstructed passage, and cold, clear, and clean water. Adult salmon returning to spawn do not eat but instead tap into fat and muscle energy reserves built up during several years in the ocean. Since they have limited resources, they need quick access to the stream where they were hatched, and barriers to passage create stress. So the life of the salmon is quite interesting but lets think a bit longer about what we can observe.

I would like to think about 3 things and then some lessons.

A. First is the Journey

Just as the salmon has the instinct to return to their homes to reproduce, as Christians we should also have the instinct to reproduce spiritually. Billy Graham said, The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.

Secondly, I think about

B. The dangers on the journey

Just as the migrating salmon face bears, eagles and other dangers, so do we as believers. We face the dangers of pride, anger, competitiveness, laziness, immaturity, and a myriad of other things as we walk the Christian road. And

many of the problems we face, besides the ones in our hearts will often come from within the church family. **What does Ps. 55:12-14 tell us?** *If it were an enemy making fun of me, I could endure it; if it were an opponent boasting over me, I could hide myself from him. But it is you, my companion, my colleague and close friend. We had intimate talks with each other and worshiped together in the Temple.*

Thirdly, there is

C. The opportunity

Here we see the privilege to lay eggs as it were. The salmon lays her eggs. She seizes the opportunity to plant. We need to be sure to plant seed as well. We need to be sure to take the opportunity. **Thought:** Just as a new crop of salmon cannot come about unless the eggs are laid and fertilized, neither can new Christians be born unless we sow the seed of the gospel and water it. So in the way of lessons to consider from the life of the salmon.

- Remember, that like the salmon, your role as a Christian is to reproduce.
- Remember that like the salmon much of your Christian life will be spent swimming up stream
- Remember that like the salmon you will face many dangers on your journey.

Listen to what Paul said in that vain in II Cor. 11:25-28 *Three times the Romans beat me with a big stick, and once my enemies stoned me. I have been shipwrecked three times, and I even had to spend a night and a day in the sea. During my many travels, I have been in danger from rivers, robbers, my own people, and foreigners. My life has been in danger in cities, in deserts, at sea, and with people who only pretended to be the Lord's followers. I have worked and struggled and spent many sleepless nights. I have gone hungry and thirsty and often had nothing to eat. I have been cold from not having enough clothes to keep me warm. Besides everything else, each day I am burdened down, worrying about all the churches.*

Finally,

- Remember that like the salmon we can't give up no matter how much the opposition until we reach our goal, or God removes us.

Well lets think about these lessons the next time we watch a salmon migration on the nature channel



The Shrew

THE shrew is a small, about 3-4 inches and weighing between a 1/2 to an ounce, short-legged, mouse like animal with a long, pointed nose. There are over 300 difference species of shrews in the world and they live on every continent except Australia and Antarctica.

Shrews are solitary animals other than during mating season. Because of their very sharp teeth, aggressive nature, and big appetite, shrews are capable of killing animals many times larger than themselves.

Shrews do everything extremely fast. They are extremely active and nervous, and have a higher metabolic rate than any other animal. The heart of the masked shrew, *for instance*, beats 800 times a minute, considerably faster than that of the hummingbird. Shrews must eat continually in order to stay alive; most will starve to death if deprived of food for half a day.

But I want us to think of a couple of lessons we can learn from these little creatures from the animal kingdom. First,

A. On feeding

Just as the shrew needs to feed frequently to live, so we as Christians need spiritual food frequently if we are to grow and be productive in our Christian lives. Feed on, and heed, God's word I Timothy 4:13 says "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine". We need to read the bible ourselves, as well as hearing it read during services It is one sign of well fed Christian when we read, hear, learn how to, and apply God's word to our lives.

B. From their nose which is long and pointed

Remember to keep your nose in your own business unless it is something you see that could cause death or physical harm. Many times Christians are nosy just so they can gossip instead of helping and that is a bad thing

C. On their being aggressive

Ephesians 5:21 says Be willing to serve each other out of respect for Christ.

Submit to one another instead of being aggressive towards one another. Stop fighting and chewing on one another with our own sharp teeth just to try and get your own way in church life.

The formula is more submission and less aggression equals more blessings for one and all. Philippians 2:3,4 says *In whatever you do, don't let selfishness or pride be your guide. Be humble, and honor others more than yourselves. Don't be interested only in your own life, but care about the lives of others too.*

Let your testimony and ministry, not be aggressive like the shrew, but instead let it be one of Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers. Those who strive to prevent contention, strife, and war; who use their influence to reconcile opposing parties, and to prevent lawsuits and hostilities in families and neighborhoods.

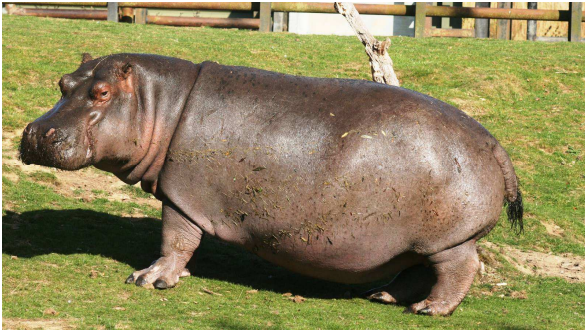
Finally,

D. On their being quick in all they do:

- Be quick to help one another
- Be quick to pray for one another
- Be quick to forgive one another

The shrew may be small but there are some big lessons that we can learn from this little fellow.

Well I want to end on a much larger note by looking at



The Hippopotamus

After the elephant and rhinoceros, the hippopotamus is the largest land animal and can weigh up to three tons. Despite its stocky shape and short legs, however, the hippo can easily outrun a human.

The name "hippopotamus" was derived, sometime in the 1600s, from Greek words for "river" and "horse." Unlike the pigmy hippo, the more common river hippopotamus is easily recognized by its tremendous size. It has a barrel-shaped torso, an enormous mouth and teeth, and a nearly hairless body.

The hippo's yawn which most people remember seeing in pictures and documentaries is not a sign of sleepiness or boredom but is actually a threat gesture, displaying long, thick, razor-sharp canine teeth, or tusks, with which it is capable of biting a small boat in half.

The hippo is one of the most aggressive creatures in the world and is often regarded as one of the most dangerous animals in Africa. Large hippos are usually covered with old scars and fresh, deep wounds are signs of daily fights that are accompanied by much roaring, and snorting. In Africa, more people are killed by hippos than by any other animal.

Hippos have unique skin that needs to be kept wet for a good part of the day so they must be close to a water source to survive. Staying out of the water for too long can lead to dehydration, so hippos try to stay in the water during the day.

They don't have true sweat glands; instead, hippos secrete a thick, red substance from their pores known as "blood sweat" because it looks like the animal is sweating blood. But not to worry! The blood sweat creates a layer of mucous that protects hippo skin from sunburn and keeps it moist. It is thought that this mucous may also prevent infections because even large wounds don't get infected despite the filthy water hippos sometimes live in.

The tusk-like incisors and canines grow continuously during a lifetime. They are ivory, valued even more highly than an elephant's because they do not turn yellow with age. I read where George Washington's false teeth were not made of wood, as is commonly believed, but were carved from the tusks of a hippopotamus.

So what about a couple of spiritual thoughts or things for us to consider from this magnificent animal.

A. From their life in, and need to be, around water much of which is lived submerged underwater. Lets learn to

Stay submerged in Gods word so we can know what to do, and how to do it in a way that brings for good fruit for the Lord in and through our lives.

Stay submerged in Gods work because of the challenge found in John 9:4 *We must do what the one who sent me wants us to do while it is day. The night when no one can do anything is coming.*

From this passage we may learn: that it is our duty to invest our God given time in doing the will of God who allows us time for everything. Then we can learn that we should seek for opportunities of doing good, and don't allow anything to pass by without improving it. The simple fact is: we go but one time through this world, and we cannot return to correct errors, and recall neglected opportunities of doing our duty.

We should be especially diligent in doing our Lord's work from the fact that the night of death is coming. This applies to the old, for they will soon die; and to the young, for they may die sooner than expected and be called away from this world to eternity.

B. Hippos are often aggressive towards intruders in their territory and as we saw earlier are considered one of the most dangerous African animals. We desperately need to learn that we are in God's family and service to serve one another, not just to stake out our territory or position. Do you have a servants heart or a lords opinion, desire, and attitude of who you are and what your place in the church is that you want?

Thirdly from those teeth lets remember

C. Don't be dangerous to others in the body. Be careful about leaving scars, not from using our ivory canines on one another but instead, our tongues to cut one another. Don't forget: The tongue is only 3 inches, but it can kill a man that is 6 ft tall. Two reminders from the book of James.

Reminders not about the danger of gnashing teeth but the danger of a biting tongue which is far more dangerous even than, the teeth of the hippo

1:26 If a person thinks that he is religious but can't control his tongue, he is fooling himself. That person's religion is worthless.

3:5-8 In the same way the tongue is a small part of the body, but it can brag about doing important things. A large forest can be set on fire by a little flame. The tongue is that kind of flame. It is a world of evil among the parts of our bodies, and it completely contaminates our bodies. The tongue sets our lives on fire, and is itself set on fire from hell. Yet, no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil filled with deadly poison.

Instead of leaving scars on one another lets determine to let (Colossians 4:6) be your motto when you feel like opening your mouth real big like the hippo does in a display of dominance and power.

The verse says it this way: *When you talk, you should always be kind and wise. Then you will be able to answer everyone in the way you should.*

Well a look at the hippo has left us a couple things to think about. Things that will help us as individual and also as a family in the church. And we can say thank you Lord for allowing any who desire, to learn from this special member of the animal kingdom

Thanks for visiting Wild Kingdom with us over these weeks and may your life and church be richer for the time we spent with God's creatures, the animals.