

Sermon, *God's Imagination*  
The Very Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels, 2.8.26

Isaiah 58:1-9a, [9b-12]  
1 Corinthians 2:1-12, [13-16]  
Matthew 5:13-20  
Psalm 112:1-9, (10)

Let me ask you a question, on a scale between 1 and 10, with ten being the highest, how would you rate your imagination? Are you a really imaginative person or do you consider yourself to be a 1 or a 2? Some have told me they'd answer "n/a" if it was possible because they don't think they have a very good imagination. For some reason, at All Angels on Longboat Key, FL, I've run into many people who do not consider themselves to be very imaginative. To them, I ask this: were you born on Longboat Key? Did you go to school here? This is when they usually laugh because Longboat has no hospitals or schools. It's a ten-mile-long sand bar that protects Sarasota and Bradenton from wind and wave action off the Gulf. The only way on the island is by bridge or boat (and for most of its existence within human history, it was only available by boat, thus the name). Everyone who calls Longboat home, or visits for a day or a season, has come from somewhere else. So, let me ask you again, how do you rate your imagination? I'd say that if you are on Longboat, you've got a pretty good imagination. You imagined a life here but you were not born here, nor did you grow up here or go to school on this island – that tells me you have an imagination.

Think about this, if you were to rate God on the same scale, how would you rate God's imagination? Do you think God has a good imagination? I'd say that God does. Consider the lily in the field. Have you ever taken a good look at a flower? What type of imagination does it take to make one flower? Unlike most art, the closer you get to a flower the more beautiful it becomes. If you get a macro lens and really zoom up on a flower pedal you will see even more beauty and imagination. Flowers have texture – and not the same texture on every flower. Flowers have smell and, like texture, that smell changes depending on the flower. My dad, the biologist, sees beauty even in a dissected flower. The way it is formed, the way it grows, the way that it is beautiful at every stage in its life. If you believe God created flowers, then how can you not put God at the top of the ranked list of imagination. The humbling thing about flowers is that they were here before human existence and, if humans die out, they'll still be here. But, I think we're here to appreciate them.

How about the ordinary housefly? Does that creature represent God's imagination? Why yes, I'd say that it does because someone decided to catalog every type of housefly in the continental United States. Did you know there were different types of flies that invade your house? Why yes there is. This guy started researching and collecting them. He came up with 2,500 different types! Why 2,500, because he stopped counting them. God has such an amazing imagination that God made more than 2,500 different types of flies that can enter your home. How many flies are there in the world? Honestly, no one knows. It's not more than we can count but it is certainly more than we would want to count!

How about spiders? Do you know how many different spiders can enter your home? No, and yeah, I don't think you want to know. I talked to a research scientist at San Diego State University who had categorized a whole bunch of different spiders and had them on display. He said categorizing spiders is one of the easiest things to do in the scientific field because no one wants to do it. The problem he said is in funding. No one wants to pay someone to go count them. This scientist believes that there are 60k different spiders in the world that we have not categorized. He's guessing and the number might be much higher than that.

Why do I bring up flowers and houseflies and spiders? Because God has an INCREDIBLE imagination and one way we get to see it is with those three different types of living things. I believe that it is really hard to understand God but, one area that God has on full display is God's imagination (if we're willing to take a look at it). How many different shades of green are there in the State of Florida? More than our eye is able to discern. God loves green, and flowers and spiders and houseflies; above all of that, God loves you. So, why are you worried about what happens to you when you die?

I ask that because some folks on this island have told me that when you die that it; the light goes out; there's nothing, you are gone, disappeared and done. If that was true, then why does God recycle everything else on this planet but for humans, when we're dead that is it; lights out? How could that be? It doesn't make any logical sense.

Speaking of logic, St. Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth back in the year 0055. In that church community, there were some who wanted "wisdom" (*Sophia*) as Paul wrote but I think it's better translated as "logic" in 21<sup>st</sup> century American English. People in that community wanted logical proof of God's existence. There was another group on the community who wanted "signs"; better understood in our day and time as "miracles". They wanted someone who was deathly ill to suddenly be healed and, when that didn't happen, responded with disbelief in God. Paul wrote: *some wanted logic, others wanted signs; but, how about this, as it is written in Scripture, 'No eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, no mind has ever perceived the good things that God has imagined for those who love him.'* Paul was quoting Isaiah from two different sections (chapter 53 and 64). Isaiah was talking/writing to a community that had believed that God had abandoned them; Isaiah said that no one can conceive of the good things that God has imagined for us. We have the benefit of history to see that they were in captivity in Babylon at the time and later they were set free and made an amazing nation and now the world is blessed by all the accomplishments – scientific, music, literature, the arts, etc – of the people of the Jewish faith. No one could imagine that would happen. No one, except God.

Back to the whole die-lights-out concept. Why? Why would God do that? Why would we be the most prized and loved of all of God's creation yet, when we die, that's it. The flower grows, pollinates, dies, goes back into the earth and becomes the seedbed for new life. Every living thing has a life cycle where it comes back into something else. God wastes nothing! Yet, we think that when we die that's it?

Looping back to the Isaiah reading, God was speaking through the prophet to remind or inform the people that God is going to do something that no one can imagine – but God can. I think that holds true for us today. We can see God's imagination clearly in nature. If we take time to ponder

our own lives and see how creative God has been with us – especially those who are on Longboat – then for those who look for logic, I'd say it's logical to believe that in death we have something prepared for us that no one can imagine. And I think it's a glorious-beyond-  
imagination type of a thing. St. Paul had a near-death/post-death experience. He was stoned to death and went up into what he calls the third heaven. For as much as Paul has an excellent grip on written communication, he couldn't describe what he saw. If he tried to describe it in words, he'd weaken the whole experience. I think that is along the lines of what God has planned for us. The reality of it is too big for words.

Next time you see an incredible flower display, or even get disgusted by a household spider, perhaps you can then ponder God's imagination and how you, as the light of the world, will shine in God's unimaginable glory. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.