

**Sermon: What Victor Saw**  
**Scripture: Selected Passages from Old and New Testament**  
**Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans**  
**Date: April 26, 2026**

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252,756 miles away from the earth is the furthest that the human being has been away from this planet. It was the day after Easter, April 6th, when 4 humans reached that point and as they looked back from their ship towards earth, Astronaut Victor Jerome Glover Jr from Pomona, CA said:

"As we get close to the nearest point to the Moon and the farthest point from Earth and continue to unlock the mysteries of the cosmos, I would like to remind you of one of the most important mysteries on Earth, and that is love. And to all of you down there on Earth and around Earth, we love you, from the moon."<sup>1</sup>

That's what came to the mind of this naval officer, flight engineer, scientist, when he reached the furthest point in space and turned around to see the earthrise before him. He was overwhelmed by a sense of love. You could say he was overwhelmed by a sense of God. This scientist looked at the earth from afar after a lifetime of studying its materials and processes and history and what came to mind, after all his involved, complex, intricate preparation for the voyage was that this globe floating in the midst of the vastness of space is held with love.

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<sup>1</sup> From Jeanine Santucci's article in USA Today: "Artemis Crew II Heads for Home. A Historic Journey Left Them Awestruck." April 10, 2026.  
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2026/04/10/artemis-ii-mission-inspiring-photos-quotes/89530898007/>

His first thought could have been - “look at those resources down there to be pillaged”, or “look at how much more land we Americans could take over for our purposes”, or “look at how utterly small and insignificant we are”, or “look at how amazing I am above all those others plebians down there on earth, those losers who are not as great and mighty as I am”. But it wasn’t any of that (Thankfully because our president wasn’t up there). Of course it wasn’t. Victor Glover was filled with a sense of the mystery of love. He went to the furthest point a human has ever gone from the earth, turned around to look from all those miles back and had an experience of love.

It’s so beautiful and confirms something that our Christian scriptures work so hard to convey, which is essentially when we speak of the mystery of God, we get as close as our finite minds can get to infinite mystery when we reference love, that somehow the truth of this world and our lives and even the earth itself, is best understood in the frame not of power or control or domination or engineering, but in the frame of love. Of course this is what filled the heart of Glover as he saw the earth from out there, of course because it’s the truth of the matter. It was all forged out of love. “For God so loved the world...” is how one of the most famous of all passages in our sacred text begins. For God so loved the world that He gave. God made the world out of love and sustains the world in love and saves the world through love and in the end the world is fulfilled in love.

In other terms, the greatest power in all the universe, that set worlds into being and holds them there in their becoming is not a

*power over* but a *power with*, cause that is how love works. As the feminist Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson describes it, it's actually this very notion that helps us to also get out of an old simplistic understanding of the monarch God up there creating the world down here. How can we understand a Creator with the great complexity of evolution. She write, and I'll quote her at length:

5 or so billion years ago on an outer arm of the Milky Way Galaxy, our sun was formed from the dust and gas expelled by a previous generation of exploding stars. Gravity pulled the swirling debris together shaping into a new star with orbiting planets, earth being the third one out. Evidence suggests that early in our planet's history a large object crashed into it, gouging out the moon. The science of plate tectonics traces how continents have formed and moved about; when the India landmass rammed into the Eurasian plate, the pressure thrust up the immense Himalayan mountain range, which is still growing taller. Ice ages with their moving glaciers carved out river valleys and land formations, such as the Hudson River and its palisades. Volcanoes keep on bringing up molten rock from the planet's fiery interior. In our day sea levels are rising, inundating coasts and drowning ocean islands. The air itself is growing warmer; instead of being expelled, the sun's heat is being trapped in a blanket of gasses rapidly accumulating from humans burning fossil fuels. Since life began on this planet more than 3.5 billion years ago different species of plants and animals have evolved in sync with this changing environment, emerging, disappearing... the ambling character of life's evolutionary emergence over billions of years, which entails genuinely chancy occurrences and the enormity of suffering and extinction, is hard to reconcile with a simplistic idea of God the Creator at work.<sup>2</sup>

Though she moves on to say that a less simplistic account of the great mystery of God is not God as an individual actor but as the

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<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Come Have Breakfast: Meditations on God and the Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2024), 17–18.

unimaginable personal source of all beings, the very Ground of Being, a generative ocean of love, a Creator Spirit God not exercising power-over but as love that empowers with. And if God is love then we know how love operates, not as power over, dominating and controlling and knowing better than we, determining us and bending us to His Great Will, but rather the one being loved receives a strengthening of their personal autonomy, bringing about their participation in their flourishing and becoming. It's a partnership, love must always be, and that's how the processes of the earth work and the processes of our own lives in relation to God. The world and us therein are free partners as God's good creation and God is like, this is how Johnson describes it, God is like: "Go have an adventure, see what you can become and I will be with you every step of the way."<sup>3</sup>

This is deeply and profoundly biblical, even though the more monarch-notion of God as holding power-over is also in the biblical text, the definitive account of who God is which we say is revealed by Jesus Christ is finally ultimately that God is love. God is better understood as empowering from within, rather than dominating over, because that's how love works. In so far as our lives are a reflection of God's love, our lives empower those around us. But we are free creatures, not determined absolutely by this love and so we also fall into patterns of controlling, dominating, bending others to our will, grabbing more for ourselves than we need, ransacking earth for what we want, and so on and so forth. But at the heart of our faith is the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 21

God-Man Jesus Christ, suffering on the cross of existence, and returning out from that point only love. How does God get across to us how deep and true God's love for us is? He places Himself in the way of that which will destroy us and bears the brunt of it and even though we did the worse, he comes back with forgiveness and love still. How much clearer must God be that God is essentially love and that however we might try to distort the message for our benefit and to privilege ourselves over others, still God is love and love is at the heart of it all.

The day after Easter, April 6th. Victor Glover went as far away from earth as any human being has ever gone. What Victor saw when he turned back around to look at the earth suspended in the blackness of space, was not just a speck in God's vast creation of the universe but what he saw was love.

It all comes from love,  
is held in being by love,  
and in the end will return to love.  
Praise God and Amen.