

Have you ever had a day when you wanted to be a kid again? I jokingly said this morning that we had “fun” in the Adult Sunday school class – we got to play with clay. Now some did better than others. But we all had a chance to regain some of our childhood... being awed again at certain things in life. We even knew what some were trying to design in the few moments we had... imagine taking a lump of clay and molding into something... awesome!

I always marvel at God’s timing (who knew we would play with clay this morning?). The sermon themes and Scripture readings are selected weeks or months in advance. Today our theme is asking the question of whether or not we have lost our capacity for awe, wonder or amazement. I wondered over the past couple of weeks what a good illustration would be for today and then last Sunday we had a family visit with five month old twins. Now, one five month old would have been quite enough, but twins! We were able to ooh and ah over twins! We saw again potential and possibilities, wonder and awe. Our God is an awesome God!

The Psalmist is taking a few minutes to wonder at creation, to stop and smell the roses, we would say today. “When I consider your heavens...” He has taken time to stop and look at all the wonders of God’s creation. Of course things were not as complicated then as they are now. Schedules were not as minute-driven and well, who can stop going 65 MPH down I-5 or even slow down to look at nature? I remember flying from Seoul, S. Korea back to Los Angeles. We took off early in the morning and the sun was rising as we were flying over Japan and I got to see the sunrise on Mount Fuji. Now for some reason the pilot would not stop or turn around so that I could get my camera out and get some good pictures! It is hard to stop and smell the roses. Life goes by too fast!

And also, today we have all the scientific explanations as to why things are the way they are. I have heard a radio commercial over the last few weeks. A father and daughter are together and she asks, “Daddy, why is the sky blue?” Dad responds with something about the color of her eyes, etc. She responds, “That is not what Mommy says.” Dad responds “What does Mommy say?” And she goes into a long explanation about light refraction, etc. The gist of the commercial is that little girls need science, too. But scientific explanations do take away some of the wonder and the awe, the amazement of creation.

“When I look at the heavens...” When was the last time you star gazed? As I think back, I did spend a few minutes the night of the lunar eclipse, but it was cold! Other than that – a few years ago Mars was as close to the earth as it would be for quite a while. We had a church member who had a substantial telescope and another who owned a house on top of a hill. So we had a Mars party (admission: one Mars bar). We spent the night following Mars and some stars across the night sky. We were amazed at how fast Mars traveled as we looked at it through the telescope. Looking with the naked eye it seemed almost stationary but when looking through the telescope we had to have it adjusted constantly to keep up with its movement. We marveled in awe.

The Psalmist then reflects on man/woman. Where are we in God’s scheme of things? We are made in the very image of God. We are crowned with God’s glory and honor – with insight and wisdom. Made just a little lower than the angels, we are given dominion and stewardship responsibilities over creation. How great and wonderful is our God. How majestic is God’s name in all the earth.

This is the first Sunday after Easter. We are reminded that we have been given what we don't deserve—a second, third, fourth or more chance. We have been reminded again of the depth of God's love for creation, for us. Don't we need to stop and smell the roses? To be reminded again of the awe of creation and of God's love for us?

I was watching a National Geographic special on the Denali National Park in Alaska a few weeks ago. I was marveling at the beauty of that part of God's creation and then they talked about "ice worms!" Did you know that there are worms that live in glacial ice—at a certain temperature? They live off the nutrients found in the ice... they burrow through the ice making it somewhat porous. For me this brought another sense of awe and amazement: ice worms! Of course, I now wonder about eating snow!

Peter and John are nearing the Temple. Here is a man who has been crippled from birth, begging. He has no other recourse but to beg. His only hope is in the grace of those who come to the temple and the hope of a few meager coins each day. Whenever I read this passage I think of a scene outside a cathedral in the Philippines where a man with no arms was playing a guitar with his feet – begging for a few pesos to live by. Peter and John have no coins to give but they give what they do have (a whole sermon here – God doesn't ask us to give what we don't have, only what we have.) What they have is the ability to restore the crippled limbs. Immediately he is up and jumping, dancing and praising God around the Temple – people stare in amazement and wonder. "Is this the same man who used to beg at the Temple gate?" How can this be?

I was watching the news the other night and they were highlighting a young woman who was preparing to run one of the upcoming marathons. She had lost both legs in Iraq and was preparing to run the race on her new artificial legs. If I remember correctly she was hoping to finish the course in under four hours. I watched in amazement and wonder at her determination and at the science that is making it possible for her to live a life as normal as possible.

However, as we continue with the story of Peter and John there are consequences to their actions. They were arrested (Acts 4). This was causing too much of a stir. They must be silenced. Peter and John are caught in the political reality of their day. The religious leaders wanted to remove Lazarus from the scene after his resurrection and they had tried to silence the crowd as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. They could not see the awe, the amazement and wonder of what had happened just outside the Temple. No, they needed to keep this quiet, lest their positions of power and prestige be challenged. God no longer could awe them. Have things really changed?

Have we lost our capacity for wonder? What moves you to awe? Do we expect God's miracles in our lives? Do we expect God to awe us today? Look at the heavens, look at the springtime flowers – bulbs, etc, that have been dormant in the winter cold are now springing to new life with brilliant colors. Look at the person seated beside you. What do you see? Do you see the image of God in that person? Do you see a sense of wonder and of hope? Do you see the wonder of it all? One created in the very image of God.

Last week we celebrated the wonder of the resurrection—the miracle of Easter. Have we kept that miracle alive in our hearts these past seven days? Or, has the wonder of Easter faded with the demands and cares of our daily lives? Have we stopped to see God's hand in the heavens, in the seas, in the wonder of another person? May God bring us to a renewed sense of wonder and awe each day... the wonder of the possibilities and potential, of faith, hope and love...but the greatest of these is God's awesome love.