

Rally Day

September 12, 2021

The Rev. Emily Richards

Unbury our Talents for Wonder

Let us pray.

O God of the miracles, of galaxies and crocuses and children, I praise you now from the soul of the child within me, shy in my awe, delighted by my foolishness, stubborn in my wanting, persistent in my questioning, and bold in my asking you to help me unbury my talents for wonder and humor and gratitude, so I may invest them eagerly in the recurring mysteries of spring and beginnings, of willows that weep, and rivers that flow and people who grow in such endlessly amazing and often painful ways; that I will be forever linked and loyal to justice and joy, simplicity and humanity, Christ and his kingdom. Amen. (Ted Loder, Guerillas of Grace).

Two weeks ago, I spoke about the practice of delight, reveling in the small acts which fill us with joy and gratitude. Today I want us to think about wonder, a close companion of delight. The practice of wonder comes most easily for us as children. Just spend a few minutes with a young child and you'll see the world from a very different place. Recently, I was reminded of this gift in a memory which popped up on my FB page. My daughter Maggie as a toddler was standing barefoot in the sand, adorned with a sunhat and sunglasses and with this look of sheer bewilderment splayed across her chubby, baby face. It was her first very time at the ocean. A gorgeous day, not a cloud in the sky, very much like today. The image took me back to this precious moment in time. My sweet girl giggling as the waves crashed over her little legs. Feeling Giddy with the sand in her toes and fingers. And puzzled by the grittiness and saltiness of its tastes as she shoved handful into her mouth. As if I was experiencing the ocean for the very first time – marveling at its beauty and mystery from the perspective of a small child.

After a very serious and heated conversation about Jesus' impending suffering and death who among his followers was the greatest, Jesus scoops up a child in his arms, placing her in the very center of this circle -focusing his disciples' attention away from themselves to this little one. Jesus liked children just the way they were. He didn't ask them to be taken to the nursery during his masterful sermons or to stop running through the aisles of the synagogue during prayers. As a matter of fact, when his disciples tried to keep them from him, he was outraged. They are the ones who grasp the meaning of God's kingdom, he teaches them. "If you can't welcome the kingdom like them, you will never

get through the doorway!" A child's spirit of welcome, their open heartedness, their delight in life and especially their sense of wonder are what we adults are called to develop. "In a nutshell: If you want to spend time with God, spend time with a child." (In a sermon delivered by the Rev. Timothy C. Ahrens)

The individual in our congregation who has spent the most time with God is **NETHER** me nor Laura, nor any of our vestry or lay leaders. The person whom I have no doubt has spent the most time with God is Laurel Mosteller, because for more than two decades Laurel has spent every Sunday morning with our youngest in Godly Play. This ministry puts children at the center of the sacred circle and gives them the safe space to explore creation, God, and our sacred stories; to enter the mystery of God through storytelling and most importantly through wonder. Just ask Laurel to tell you about her experience of Godly Play and she'll enthusiastically share that in the practice of wonder with her young companions she has spent time with God Sunday after Sunday.

In one of his blog reflections, a spiritual guide Richard Rohr highlights the important of wonder in our religious lives. "A sense of wonder and awe is the foundation of religion. Too often we associate religion with belonging to a church or professing certain beliefs, but the religious instinct is so much broader than that. Sikh activist and human rights lawyer Valarie Kaur teaches us that awe and wonder can make us available to greater depths of compassion, union, and love. 'Wonder is our birthright,' Kaur declares. It comes easily in childhood—the feeling of watching dust motes dancing in sunlight, or climbing a tree to touch the sky, or falling asleep thinking about where the universe ends. If we are safe and nurtured enough to develop our capacity to wonder, we start to wonder about the people in our lives, too. We begin to sense that they are to themselves as vast and complex as we are to ourselves, their inner world as infinite as our own. In other words, we are seeing them as our equal. We are gaining information about how to love them. Wonder is the wellspring for love...

The call to love beyond our own flesh and blood is ancient. It echoes down to us on the lips of indigenous leaders, spiritual teachers, and social reformers through the centuries -expanding the circle of who counts as *one of us*, and therefore who is worthy of our care and concern. These teachings were rooted in the linguistic, cultural, and spiritual contexts of their time, but they spoke of a common vision of our interconnectedness and interdependence...What has been an ancient spiritual truth is now increasingly verified by science: We are all indivisibly part of one another. We share a common ancestry with

everyone and everything alive on earth. The air we breathe contains atoms that have passed through the lungs of ancestors long dead. Our bodies are composed of the same elements created deep inside the furnaces of long-dead stars. We can look upon the face of anyone or anything around us and say— *You are a part of me I do not yet know...* You don't have to be a religious leader or a spiritual thinker in order to open yourself to wonder. You only have to reclaim a sliver of what you once knew as a child. If you remember how to wonder, then you already have what you need to learn how to love."

Amid these uncertain and difficult days when life can seem to be so darn serious and heavy, I pray that we can reclaim what our children and grandchildren know instinctively - that we are wonderfully and marvelously made, indivisibly part of one another, composed of the very same stuff of the stars and the oceans, and created out of love for love. *O God of the miracles, of galaxies and crocuses and children, help us in this new season to unbury our talents for humor, gratitude and especially for wonder; that we will be forever linked and loyal to justice and joy, simplicity and humanity, Christ and his kingdom. Amen.*