***OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES: WOW!***

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Texts: Psalm 8 and Luke 12:22-31

Some baseball players have a quirky way of looking at the world. Tug McGraw, a closer for the Philadelphia Phillies and New York Mets, was asked how he stayed so calm when he came in to pitch with the bases loaded and the game on the line. He replied, “I just pause and look up at the sky and think of the billions of stars out there and all the other people on this planet, and it makes the result of this pitch seem pretty insignificant in comparison.”

Like Tug McGraw, the psalmist is impressed with the vast expanse of the universe. He looks at the moon and stars that are the creative work of the divine architect and is awed by them. He hears a chorus of praise echoing from heaven and earth, from babes and infants, praising the Lord who reigns over all creation. It is a chorus which you may have joined from time to time yourself as you

viewed a spectacular sunset, a brilliant rainbow, a star-studded sky or a harvest moon above, or

gazed upon the gaping expanse of the Grand Canyon, teeming life in a coral reef, or a bright, clear day in the Shenandoah Valley.

How does the creature say awe? How does the creature say praise? Those are not just the words of the hymn we sang, they are also the struggles of our hearts and minds when words seem inadequate to respond to the majesty of God’s creative work. Sometimes words are not enough; the best we can offer is a gaping mouth, a wide-eyed stare or a whispered “Wow!”

But unlike Tug McGraw who gazed at the multitude of stars and sensed his own insignificance in a vast galaxy, the psalmist gazes at those same stars and wonders, “Lord, what are frail mortals that you are mindful of them? What are children of mortals that you care for them?” Instead of finding humans insignificant amid the colossal cosmos, the psalmist is very much aware of the value of each and every human life to the cosmic creator. In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

*God did not create the world as a scientist in a laboratory. God brought it into being as parents give birth to a child: not out of curiosity, but in love. We are not the accidental outcome of a blind evolutionary process. We are the children of the living God.”[[1]](#endnote-1)*

Out of all that God created, humans alone are created in the image of God and claimed as children of God. That makes each and every one of us precious to the God who created all things.

Why did God choose to love us so? That is one of the great mysteries of faith. For whatever reason, God decided that it was good to have some of the creatures in all of creation reflect the divine image, and humans were those creatures. We are not little gods – as the psalmist says we are made a little less than gods; we are made out of the same dust of the earth and stardust that all other things are made. But out of that dust God has shaped us in the image of God and claimed us as children, so while we are not gods, we reflect a little of the divine image, albeit a faint and tarnished reflection. As Immanuel Kant puts it: “Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

We are tarnished reflections, crooked constructions, flawed beings, yet God still loves us and cares for us and calls us to a particular role in the vast expanse of creation. God has entrusted to our care the work of divine hands. In every glorious sunrise, in the brilliance of scarlet tanagers dancing in the churchyard, or in the simple beauty of a new plowed field, we see the glory of God. The majesty of the world reflects the majesty of its maker. Yet that majestic maker has given us gifts unique in all creation to care for what has been created. We have been given the means to harness energy, produce fertile crops, and domesticate animals. We have been entrusted with dominion over the earth. We are stewards accountable to an ever-present God who created all things! That is what we frail mortals are!

Too often the *dominion* of the earth we have been granted has been interpreted by sinful humanity as *domination* of the earth. We have abused the very works of God entrusted to our care. We have taken that which declared God’s glory and majesty in the delicate balance of nature and have misused it in pursuit of greedy glory and economic majesty. We have laid waste to fertile land, cut off the tops of soaring mountains to reach noxious coal, destroyed precious coastal lands that protect the shores in order to create space for more beach homes, sucked dry from the earth water to satisfy the demands of desert cities, and filled acre upon acre upon acre with the trash from our wasteful living. Dry river beds and wastelands and polluted streams and rising tides that threaten cities do not declare God’s glory! They declare God’s judgment upon us, for our destruction and greedy consumption of the earth’s resources disparage the very name of the One we are called to glorify! What are frail mortals that you are mindful of them, Lord? We are poor stewards who have not been up to the task!

We might wish that God was a little less mindful of us sometimes. With Job we might lament:

*What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them, visit them every morning, test them every moment. Will you not look away from me for a while?*

Will you not leave us alone, Lord! Why must you look on our consumption of your good gifts, on our abuse of your good earth, on our violations of your covenant, on our failure to love our neighbors? Can you not just look the other way for awhile?

Why must the Lord look upon us all the time? Because the Lord made us and loves us despite what we have done and who we have been. God looks upon us all the time, because God has promised never to leave us and refuses to abandon us to our selfish desires. God looks upon us all the time, because the Lord still dares to hope that we will repent of our ways, give up our soiled and selfish stewardship of the earth, and return to that good work for which we were created:

loving God and our neighbors,

enjoying the blessings of creation without ruining it,

exercising dominion over the earth without destroying it,

caring responsibly for all that has been entrusted to us,

and recognizing the glory of God in our midst in all creation.

God may have granted us dominion over the earth, but we are subject to the dominion of Christ who reigns over all. And Christ calls us to stop worrying about all those things that make us such poor stewards of creation, those things we think we need to survive or to thrive, those things we pursue at the cost of our calling to care for the earth and one another. Instead strive for the kingdom of God, he says. How different might the world be if we could set aside our pursuit of things and our insatiable desire to secure our own futures and our worries about day to day living and made our top priority trusting God and living into God’s call to be loving neighbors, faithful disciples, and conscientious stewards of creation!

God has blessed us with a wild and wonderful world, but too often we forsake the wonder to satisfy our worries. Unless you become like children, says Jesus, you cannot enter the kingdom! To become like children perhaps we need a little more wonder and a little less worry. Perhaps we need a little more wow in our vocabulary, a little more wonder in our living day to day, a little more winsomeness in spirit, a little more wow in our appreciation for all that God has made and for the God who made it all! For that is what the psalmist says children say about the wonder of creation: *Out of the mouths of babes: Wow!* What then comes out of your mouth? Wow and wonder – or worries and “woe is me”?

Listen to our children! Learn from our children! Embrace the wonder, let go of the worries, and fill your life and your mouth with wide, wonderful, worshipful wows – you Wascalwy Wabbits! Amen

1. Jonathan Sacks, *Celebrating Life*, Fount Press: London, 2000, p.103 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Immanuel Kant quoted by David Brooks in *The Road to Character*, Random House: New York, 2015, p.11 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)