

“Let the Earth Sing Praise!”
C Easter 6; Psalm 67
May 26, 2019; 10:00 am
Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO
Rev. Rebecca K. Poos

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm.

A Song. (NRSV)

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
- ² that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
- ³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- ⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
- ⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
- ⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
- ⁷ May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 67 The Message (MSG)

67 ¹⁻⁷ God, mark us with grace
and blessing! Smile!

The whole country will see how you work,
all the nations see how you save.

God! Let people thank and enjoy you.

Let all people thank and enjoy you.

Let all far-flung people become happy
and shout their happiness because

You judge them fair and square,

you tend the far-flung peoples.

God! Let people thank and enjoy you.

Let all people thank and enjoy you.

Earth, display your exuberance!

You mark us with blessing, O God, our God.

You mark us with blessing, O God.

Earth's four corners—honor the Holy One, the
Creator!

I. LET THE EARTH SING PRAISE!

What makes you give praise? What inspires you to
burst into song or shout—wow! Praise God!

What brings you to your knees in wonder and awe? These last couple days of blue sky, sunshine and white mountains have certainly moved my soul to praise and gratitude.

The scriptures tell us, especially in the Psalms, to “give praise to God our maker.” Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

But if the scriptures “tell you to” is that enough? We *should* do lots of things, but I wonder if that’s enough? I wonder if we’re not very good at doing the right things “just because we *should*?” Or, if it might need to be a deeper-down, soul-reaching motivation?

II. WHAT COULD WE DO FOR CREATION?

A researcher in Behavioral Economics conducted a study. She gave participants difficult ethical dilemmas. In one scenario, participants imagined they were the president of a nonprofit working to end child labor in Southeast Asia.

They had to decide whether to accept a significant donation by a company that is known to violate child labor laws or risk letting the nonprofit shut down completely. The researchers then divided the group and asked one, “What should you do?” They asked the other group, “What could you do?” The “could” group came up with more creative solutions to the dilemma than the “should” group.

Her conclusion: “Approaching problems with a “should” mindset gets us stuck on the trade-off choices and narrows our thinking to one answer, the one that seems most obvious. But when we think in terms of

“could,” we stay open-minded and the trade-offs involved inspire us to more creative solutions.”

(Article from the Harvard Business Review, April 2018)

Surprised by that? So simple, yet profound what a difference one word can make in our approach to dilemmas. Chances are you and I feel stuck about something in our lives right now. What if, no matter the issue, when we feel stuck, we asked what could we do instead of should? It’s freeing!

I think Dr. Norman Vincent Peale declared that “Possibility Thinking” a long time ago!

III. WHAT DOES CREATION DO FOR US?

Extensive research has been done by highly trained and educated scientists to prove to us that “awe” is good for us. Did you know that?! I chuckle a little at that, because the blessed beasts and children of the earth have known that for eons; since the world came to be.

In an article entitled,
“WHY SCIENTISTS SAY EXPERIENCING AWE CAN HELP YOU LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE: By Sarah DiGiulio

“Maybe you’ve felt it standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon. Maybe it happens when you think about the vastness of space or glance up at the sky and marvel at a supermoon. Or maybe you feel it when you see someone offer up a seat on a crowded train to another individual they've never met.

The emotion is **awe**. And, psychologists say it can play an important role in bolstering happiness, health and our social interactions — and it may have actually long played a role in how and why humans get along and ultimately cooperate with one another.

“People feeling awe focus more of their attention outward and value others more in social interactions, and it changes us. More awe-prone people are more curious.

Awe makes us feel small — or feel a sense of “self-diminishment” in science-speak. And that’s good for us!”

We spend a lot of our time thinking about what’s going on in our world and what’s affecting us directly. “Awe changes that, making us see ourselves as a small piece of something larger.”

Feeling small makes us feel humbled (thereby lessening selfish tendencies like entitlement, arrogance, and narcissism). And feeling small and humbled makes us want to engage with others and feel more connected to others.”

It’s also good for our physical health —in ways that are probably obvious. But, studies have actually shown a chemical change in our bodies, improving our immune health, when experiencing more positive emotions than negative ones.

Basically, more attention to awe, and experiencing a power and force greater than ourselves—whether the presence of God in Nature, a powerful spirit in

community, or whatever gives a person that sense of awe, is good for us —individually and collectively. Our bodies, minds, souls and community.

“One study involved taking a group of military veterans and a group of youth from underserved communities on a white water rafting trip to study the effect of nature (which people commonly report feeling awed by) on the wellbeing of those individuals. For every one, symptoms of PTSD went down, while scores of general happiness, satisfaction with life, social wellbeing, and how connected people felt to their community, all improved.”

Other research from Anderson’s group (which he notes is currently undergoing peer review and is not yet published) suggests that—as deemed by both themselves and their friends—and that this awe-curiosity duo may bolster academic achievement in grade-school children (as it has been linked to higher self-efficacy, work ethic, and academic performance).

“These are big societal things,” he says. “And this work is showing how important these experiences of awe can be for people in their own lives,” he says — whether that be helping veterans heal or lessening some of the forces that drive disparities among underserved communities.

If you’re not now in touch with the mysterious majesty of life, look again. It’s just as mysterious as you thought it was as a child. (Br. Curtis Almquist)

So, praise is good for us! Feeling small and humble in the presence of the majestic beauty of creation, and in the presence of the Divine—wherever we find it—touches us at a deep level. It inspires us—in the depths of our being, and makes us want to respond—in praising God, but so much more.

It inspires a reverence and a response—to help others, to share what we've been blessed with. To care for the earth and one another in return. We take off our shoes when we are on holy ground, humbly bow before our Maker and ask what we “could do” in response.

NATURE'S BEAUTY VISUALS/GENESIS

CREATION STORIES

The first recorded Irish stories were Celtic. They presented our world as eternal, represented by the famous knot-work art produced for centuries in Ireland's monasteries. There are fewer stories about the moment of creation in Celtic culture than other tribes but one I love is the story of *Oran Mór*.

ORAN MOR

Once upon a time, there was no time. There were also no Gods and no man or woman to walk the land. There was only the depths of the sea and its dark, eternal quiet. A strain of melody moved across the endless waters, a whisper first. The music was the Oran Mór “The Great Melody” and it grew into a great spiraling, gathering sound and momentum, reaching further and louder, building to a great crescendo until, where the sea met the land, a sea-horse came to be born of

white sea-foam. She was a mare, and her name was Eiocha.

Oran Mór did not cease with the initial creation. Many more came then, emerging out of the sound that was singing itself through the waters, one thing begetting another until, from an oak tree, Eiocha sprouted a plant which gave birth to the first God. They mated and begot more Gods, who felt lonely because they did not have anyone to be Godly with, and so from the wood of an oak tree they created the first man and woman, as well as the other animals. Giants too were born from the bark of that tree, when Eiocha hurled it into the water, once.

Oran Mór, in great delight, sang on, still sings on today, filling creation— for all those who can hear — with its divine harmony.

Native Creation Story, p. 13, Iroquois Book