

Date: 2012-11-11

West Valley Presbyterian Church
AKA CREATOR
Rev. Dr. Kim Engelmann

Paul says this in Acts, chapter 17, verse 24 and verse 27, "**The God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth... God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.**"

Colossians 1: "**He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on the earth... He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**"

Many of you have told me that one of the ways that you grow close to God is to take a walk out in nature – a hike, or a day at the beach. You have told me that being out in creation refreshes you and gives you a sense of the presence of God; creation fills you up with awe and wonder... a sense of grandeur and you come away feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. (IMAGES HERE)

We live in an environment that is more astounding in beauty and masterful in order than anything we could ever have orchestrated or even thought up on our own.

The grandeur of our universe, the balance of powerful forces, the intricacy of design, the pervasive presence of life itself, the vastness of outer space, the world itself dazzling with color and movement throughout our galaxy, down to the detailed particularity of the tiny spider spinning a web is a symphony of brilliance if we take the time to notice, to look, to take it in. (IMAGES HERE)

With surfers in the family we spend a lot of time at beaches; it is mesmerizing and awe inspiring to see the blue ocean of the California coast crashing along the shoreline with dolphins playing in the surf just beyond. I saw that just the other day. (BEACH IMAGE)

It's humbling and almost a reverent experience to stand beneath the CA Redwood Trees towering far above all human noise and frenzy, soaring upward in majestic silence so high that you cannot even see to the tops...to smell the fragrant wood and recognize that they predate you by sometimes hundreds and hundreds of years...(REDWOOD TREE IMAGE)

Or to stand on Haleakala for a sunrise and watch the sun's rays like spears pierce the sky and then slide brilliantly over the black porous lava rock turning it golden and lighting up the horizon with fire.(HELEAKALA IMAGE)

You and I live not far away from Santa Cruz where every year over a hundred million monarch butterflies migrate over 4,000 miles to the eucalyptus trees right next to Arched Rock Beach. (BUTTERFLY IMAGE)

We are close to Big Sur where the hawks (HAWK IMAGE)turn circles on the thermals, and we are not far from the glories of Half Moon Bay, Montara, El Granada...(TIDEPPOOL IMAGE) in all these places we can explore the multitudes of tidepools and colorful creatures nestled against sea drenched rock formation all up and down the coast and where the pelicans swoop across sets of waves running their wing tips lightly across the foamy wave tops, just for the joy of it.

All of this inspires in us a sense of wonder. That sense of wonder comes surging up from inside of us...as we observe such beauty and design...we can be moved, transfixed, speechless...at the exquisiteness of creation...it speaks to us of something *more than us*...Ultimately of Someone more...the one behind all of this immensity and brilliance.

Scripture tells us... in Acts, chapter 17, verse 24 and verse 27, "**The God who made the world and everything in it is Lord of heaven and earth... God did this so that we would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.**"

A colleague of mine tells the story of a friend who drove his eight-year-old son for his birthday to the Grand Canyon.

When you drive to the Grand Canyon, you don't see anything until you get there.

They arrived in the parking lot on one of the rims right before sunrise. My

friend said to his eight-year-old son, "Do you trust me?" Eight-year-old kid, "Of course, I trust you, dad. That's kind of a weird question." So he held his son's hand, and he walked him right up to the edge of the rim. He told his son to stay there and keep his eyes closed until he told him to open them. (IMAGE OF GRAND CANYON AT SUNRISE) Then he waited until the sun came up. Right at that moment when the streaks of light came across the top of the Canyon, he said to his son, "Open your eyes." He said for the next 30 seconds, his son shook his head from side to side. His mouth just hung open. Then he looked up at his father with tears in his eyes, and he repeated over and over again, "I had no idea. I had no idea."

I want to ask all of us in this room, when has following God... evoked in you that sense of "I had no idea." The sense of awe and wonder...because that is who the created order reflects...the Author of this grand design seeks to be known.... Awe, wonder, amazement, reverence – that's what the magnificence of creation does for us – and creation is a reflection (although a fallen reflection...can you imagine creation in its original form) of the Master Creator What must God be like? How magnificent and glorious? How beautiful to behold?

Children have a sense of wonder and delight at a very young age. "Look," they will exclaim amazed at about age 2 or 3 walking along the sidewalk trying to keep up with the brisk pace of an adult who may be pulling them along. "Look! It's a little lady bug!" (IMAGE OF BUG) And they will crouch down and watch the little red round bug lumber along, while the adult says, "Well of course it's a lady bug...but we don't have time to look at the ladybug right now. We have to go."

Awe and wonder are stamped out of us pretty early as we exchange delight in the world around us and all of its beauty, for efficiency, productivity, increased responsibility and a goal oriented lifestyle. Such a lifestyle, though it has its place, kind of takes the joy, the fun, the sponenaiety out of things, doesn't it?

Wonder and delight are sidelined for the brass tacks of living .
The sense that there is something more...someone more....then our agendas and our to do lists gets lost in the flurry of activity, (IMAGE OF CITY) the incessant noise and constant movement of always going somewhere else, but never being where we are long enough to notice, to ponder, to take in, to be amazed and filled with awe...

Maybe take a break this week from the hurry and the rush, the pressure and the tension, the somber meeting rooms, the deadlines and the hunched backs over the pervasive laptops and Iphones.(IMAGE OF PEOPLE HUNCHED OVER SCREENS)

....slow down a bit, lift your head from the screens and the ipads, the phones and the laptops... and look up and take a look at the magnificence of creation. Take in its beauty ...go somewhere so you can be awed by the world we live in!

Let yourself experience wonder. (IMAGE OF SERENE MAJESTIC SCENE) And as you do this, see if you don't also get the sense that Someone is calling to you beyond yourself and wishes to be recognized, worshipped, adored and praised.

Of course awe and wonder are hard to come by because we live in a scientific age where we understand NOW how it all works...and we tell kids in schools these days that all that sustains life, the air we breathe, the earth's resources, and the delicate balance of our environment and the complex phenomenon we call life, has somehow happened quite by accident.

We have taken God out of the equation...and between the lines we are telling our kids that they are just a random occurrence.

No wonder our kids struggle so much...with meaning and purpose...with identity and love...

We long to have meaning. We want purpose. We want deep relationship.

We seek and need far more than just an existence. We want it to mean something! Why is that? Why do we want this? Where does that come from?

A Creator God that can be known, who calls out to us in creations glory to be grasped/apprehended in all of this miraculous wonder – who promises meaning and purpose, and identity as his children; who gives us relationship in his love...that ONE we were created FOR – fits hand in glove with our

deepest longings.

That's the One who has

been neatly snipped out of the equation in favor of trusting our 3 ½ pounds of gray matter instead; trusting our finite, limited understanding to explain everything that is...

A close friend of President Franklin Roosevelt once visited him at the White House. After dinner, the two men talked well into the night about affairs of state and other weighty and important matters. When their conversation had wound down, FDR suggested they step into the Rose Garden to look at the stars. It was a beautiful, clear night, and the two stood in silence, taking in the wonder of God's creation. Then Roosevelt turned to his friend and said, "All right. I think we feel small enough now to go in and go to sleep."

We are small, limited, finite, only on this planet for such a short time...so not able to comprehend all that is within our lifetime...Annie Dillard says tongue in cheek,

If creation had been left up to me, I'm sure I wouldn't have had the imagination or courage to do more than shape a single, reasonably sized atom, smooth as a snowball, and let it go at that. No claims of any and all revelations could be so far-fetched as a single giraffe .--Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), 144.

In my mind there is nothing more unscientific than assuming that the complexity of life has itself evolved spontaneously with no overarching plan or master design or intent.

In fact, **GK Chesterton** called atheism a very difficult claim...it makes much more sense he said and was **far more plausible scientifically to believe in a Divine intelligence behind all of this than to not believe...**

Even **David Hume**, who was considered the father of modern skeptics, wrote that **the whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent Author**

I just want to share a few facts with you that you may or may not know in order to help you recover that sense of awe and wonder that I think we were meant to have as we behold the created order, and that ultimately was

designed to draw us to apprehend God as joy-filled, supremely intelligent Creator.

The chance that our universe happened by accident is as remote as this penny illustration...

Suppose you put ten pennies, marked from one to ten, into your pocket and give them a good shuffle. (IMAGE OF PENNIES)

Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten, putting back the coin each time and shaking them all again.

Mathematically we know that your chance of first drawing number one is.... one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession is one in 100; of drawing one, two and three in succession, is one in 1000, and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, would reach the unbelievable figure of one in ten billion.

By the same reasoning, so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. Each of these exacting conditions has a one in ten billion chance of happening...that's the probability...

Some of these exacting conditions are as follows...

The earth rotates on its axis 1000 miles an hour at the equator; if it turned at 100 miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would likely burn up our vegetation each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout might well freeze. (IMAGE OF EARTH)

Again the sun, source of our life, has a surface temperature of 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal life" warms us *just enough and not too much* ! If the sun gave off only one half its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave as much more, we would roast. (IMAGE OF SUN)

The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; If the earth had not been so tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, piling up for us continents of ice. (IMAGE OF OCEAN)

If our moon were, say, only 50,000 miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides might be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountains could soon be eroded away. (IMAGE OF MOON)

If the crust of the earth had only been ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen, without which animal life must die. (IMAGE OF EARTH'S CRUST)

Had the ocean been a few feet deeper, carbon dioxide and oxygen would have been absorbed and no vegetable life could exist.

Albert Einstein said. **“Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.”**

Today when you leave here and walk out into the sunshine...pause a minute and just take in the amazing fact that you exist...and you exist in an environment that sustains and supports your existence

Reflect on that fact that you really had nothing to do with this created order in which you live

Or even your body and all of its functioning and complexity

Today when you leave here, be a little amazed at all of this we call life...

Try to rediscover, *if its been stamped out of you by obligation and duty*, a sense of wonder...take a little time to ponder the creation...that calls out to us “believe”...

Believe that you are not alone...believe that there is One who holds all this together....

Believe that the One who created all this beauty that we’ve been talking about desires that you enjoy it, live in awe of it...and ultimately that as you participate in the awe and wonder of creation you will then seek out the ONE behind all this... that what you see, who awes you in creation...will draw you to worship and be in awe of the Lord... to love and honor that amazing God with all of your heart...

And also as Christians I want you to take in the very moving reality that the Creator of all of this wonder desires *your* friendship and *your* love in a deep sustained personal way. This Creator God, all powerful, all magnificent, all intelligent and forever in love with the world, has done this thing that we call creation in order for you to be alive and in relationship with him.

This One who far exceeds even the most genius among us,
The first cause, the voice behind creation, this far Superior intelligent being lowered himself to become like us in Jesus Christ; so that we could know him personally, be forgiven, come into right relationship with him and when this life is over go and live with him for all eternity.

That’s the most moving part of the Christian message for me...from vastness and power and intelligent design...to particularity in Jesus Christ, walking

where we walked, living where we live, and finally dying for our sins –so that we can be reunited with him..

When writer Philip Yancey locked himself in his isolated Rocky Mountain cabin in mid-winter,(CABIN IMAGE) it was to read his Bible straight through and try to get a feel for the big picture. When he finished, Yancey concluded that the Bible was not about moral laws or divine dictums, rather about a romance, following the story of God, the Jilted Lover (God, the Jilted Lover, Christianity Today [16 May 1986],76). Yancey's final, amazed reaction to the story of God's unrequited quest after humanity was Why would the God who created all that exists subject himself to such humiliation from his creation? EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS...FOR US
You are AMAZING GOD! As we sang earlier...
That's why we are meant to rejoice. We are loved and valued that much!

The greatest Creative work of God ever is when God creates a new heart that will receive him.

When we are recreated in such a way that we believe...when our hearts are set on fire by the Holy Spirit and we are in essence “born again”....this is God's ultimate creative act and salvation for the world...

Listen to Francis Collins now who is

(DR FRANCIS COLLINS INTERVIEW ON CNN) - YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIOFqyFYfrU>

In the beauty of creation.... a scientist recognizes the voice of the Creator... calling him to wonder, to awe...and to new life in Jesus Christ. May we too, hear the Creators voice calling us home to him...AMEN