

**The Early Church – AWE**  
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Here in this passage in Acts we have a glimpse, a window of the early church, - its as if Luke is taking a deep breath and saying – OK...lets raise our heads up and look around a little bit...

Now after the coming of the Holy Spirit...this wonderful gift  
And the thousands who came to Christ  
And the powerful preaching of Peter

This is what we have...this is how the believers are functioning,

The word that strikes me the most in this passage which is a glimpse of the early church is  
Verse 43 says

“Great **awe** fell upon everyone” ...that’s how Luke describes this body of new believers. They were filled with awe. Luke lists in this short passage what many think are the four marks of the church:

- 1. The apostles teaching (preaching, teaching)**
- 2. The common life together (fellowship)**
- 3. The breaking of bread (communion/sacraments)**
- 4. The prayer**

We need all of these in our churches. You can’t separate these four components without hurting the other. They belong together and they comprise the main components of the church today.

But they all stem from this sense of awe that the followers of Jesus had together!

So let me ask you...when was the last time you were in awe of something or someone?

Was it the last time you saw a stunning sunrise or sunset – and you thought this is just beyond beautiful...it brings tears to my eyes...

Or maybe you had a sense of awe when recently you viewed a mountain range, or you looked up at the stars at night...

Right now I am in awe of the Warriors - Steph Curry, Klay Thompson, Draymond Green, who seem to be able to pass that basketball with lightening speed, and shoot 3 point baskets with the ease that most of us dunk donuts into our coffee.

I can't believe the Warriors right now. I stand in awe. Their skill and their speed amaze me. (And for those of you who don't know, Steph Curry is a deep Christian and actually has Le Croy, the leader of a contemporary Christian band, as his mentor – )

We all have moments when we experience awe.

I remember the awe that a friend of mine had going to visit his first grandchild. He said "I just stood there, holding this tiny life in my arms, and thinking "this is just incredible" – I couldn't stop smiling. I was in awe of her...she looked just like me!"

And I remember... the tears streaming down a colleagues face that I saw after he had listened to Yo Yo Ma play the cello. The beauty was beyond anything he had words to describe...

What is awe?

Well many of the definitions I looked up included the word "wonder" as a synonym for Awe. One definition put it this way...AWE is ***overwhelming wonder, admiration, respect...produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful, or the like: in awe of God***

If we went around this room each of you would be able, to share stories about when you too have had an experience that awed you – and made you realize in a new way that there is a Reality larger than us at work in our world.

When we see that other Reality at work, it can move us to tears, or it can fill us with joy, and excitement or it can leave us speechless;

The early church was filled with AWE as they began to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their midst. As they began to realize, discover and participate in what God was like.

Are you filled with AWE today, as you worship; as you prepare to take communion today?

This week Terri Dias and I were talking and she told me that she had heard on KFAX Christian Radio a speaker who was talking about AWE. And this speaker told the audience that as Christians, "**We don't have a law problem; we have an awe problem.**"

Meaning that we know – most of us – the law.  
We know the difference between right and wrong.

When we cheat, steal, gossip, use alcohol or other substances in an addictive way to black out our pain, when we are unfaithful to our spouse, go on the wrong computer sites that feed an addiction, have envy, or resentment toward one another, when we hold back from giving generously from greed, we know we aren't doing life the best way...

We know we are wrong

**Our** problem is not a law problem.

Its an awe problem. We forget who God is.

We forget that God inspires awe in everyone whom he encounters in scripture; and that our lives our meant to be lived in reverent humble service and in relationship to that powerful One, who could easily snuff us out with the breath of his mouth if he so chooses.

If you read the encounters of God that people have in the Bible, most times, what they do? When God comes to them, they fall on their face as though dead...they cannot speak...they are filled with awe in his presence.

Even Peter in the New Testament, after Jesus does a miracle he falls on his face in front of Jesus and says, "Depart from me. I am a sinful man." He was filled with awe. He knew he was in the presence of holiness.

Kind of like when you get dressed in the dark early in the morning, and you put on a white shirt that you think is clean, and then you get to the office, and you might have an important meeting...but those bright fluorescent lights show everything...all the coffee stains in the front...and you look down and you realize...

UGH! In the light I can see that I am wearing a dirty shirt – I couldn't see it in the dim light of the bedroom – I thought I looked pretty good - but the bright light shows it all up...

We can think we are okay people, until we encounter the God of all Creation – our Holy God, and then we fall on our face. We realize our weakness, our uncleanness, our mortality, our frailty.

And yet, this table today attests to the fact that this God always raises us up off of our faces... he doesn't want us to grovel on the ground. This Gdo wants us to stand up and talk with him. You see this always in scripture when people fall on their face before God...God always says something like

"Don't be afraid...stand up...look at me...lets have a conversation...OR...I want to show you something...OR...I want you to do something for me..."

This God wants us to be in relationship with us; if that wasn't his will, we would evaporate in his presence – poof – Like ice on a hot skillet – gone.

But God wanted to make this arrangement with us so much that he sacrificed himself, in Jesus, to make it happen...and as Christians we know this

But I think after 2,000 years of Christianity, we can sometimes forget how big God is... how awe inspiring.

The Jews got that in the early church – the awe of God is. They were products of OT literature...where God was known as a consuming fire, a whirlwind, or lightening, I AM that I AM;

Jews wouldn't even say the name of God – it was too Holy; now you hear the word God used flippantly, all over; OMG

Friends, for us today, sometimes we need to go out and look at the stars, and recover a sense of who it is that died for us. We need to recover the awe of the early church...

Let's not make Jesus too small, and put God comfortably in our front pocket so we can live the way we want, and take him out when we need him...

When we do, we lose the awe. We lose the wonder. And it isn't just awe and wonder at God's vastness that we lose; its also the awe and wonder at the power, the strength and the depth of Gods love for us.

When we stand in awe when we recognize who God is we say ***“Lord! You want to have a relationship with me? You have got to be kidding!”*** The answer is always a Divine, ***YES – enough to die for you***

Be awed at this when you take communion today.

This is the God of all creation who has sacrificed his life for you, forgives your sins, and lifts you up and says to you today *talk to me...let's have a relationship.*

I was going to end this communion meditation here. I really was. And then I got this email late in the week from someone in our congregation who has been struggling for a long time.

This person this past week had an experience of God's presence that changed everything. Friends, if you are struggling today...never ever give up...

I can't go into all the details, but can you believe this...Look at how this email starts...this person writes...

***I am just in awe. I have struggled for so long and have fought so hard just to be able to stand, to live. Now I can stand in confidence and surety...  
It was a moment with God...Like light chasing away darkness.... It just happened. It is not anything I did. It was a wonderful God moment that happened in my life. IT WAS A MIRACLE!***

I had to share that with you.

The fact that God, uses his holy power to love us and heal us, rather than destroy us, is a Divine Mystery.

The fact that he would give his life, to give us life, is something that could cause us to tremble...tremble...tremble (as the old hymn says)

Let's take communion in awe this morning...

Let us pray: They devoted themselves to the disciples teaching, to the breaking bread and the prayers. Great awe fell on everyone and many miracles were done by the apostles...

Clearly Lord, you are still doing miracles, just like in Acts 2000 later, as this email attests. You are still inspiring awe in your people...you are still working your miracles.

Give us the grace to be awed at this table this morning; You who Created us all, you who could snuff us out with your very breath, instead you invite us to this table.

You who made the stars and you who hold the universe in your hand; Here You are, laid out for our consumption...for our forgiveness...for our salvation.

We are grateful Amen.