

**Sermon: "A Moon With a View"**  
**Scripture: Galatians 3:26-29**  
**Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans**  
**Date: October 4, 2015**

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Our Psalm this morning that Rob and Hannah read so beautifully in English and Norwegian is on the moon. Did you know that? Psalm 8 is on the moon. When the Apollo 11 mission landed there in July of 1969, they left a disc with information from 73 nations and one of the documents left was the text from Psalm 8 – "When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? O Lord how majestic is your name in all the universe!" I imagine the Hebrew man or woman who penned those words about 3 thousand years ago would have been surprised to have been told where his/her words would be one day!

But there was another celestial expedition that took place before the Apollo 11 mission to the moon that was as significant if not more so in terms of the effect that it has had upon human consciousness. It was about a year and half earlier when the Apollo 8 mission circled the moon on the Winter Solstice; December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1968. Many of you probably remember it and can share your own experience of the moment. It would still be a year or so before I was born, but as I've heard it told there was a moment when in the broadcast of the crew back to earth one of the astronauts who had a hand held camera said casually, "I'm going to turn the camera around and show you the earth. And it was then, the first time in all of human history that humanity saw the earth, their home, hanging in space like that, a little blue oasis against the immense back drop of a universe. One of the Astronauts, Bill Anders, who took most of the pictures from the spacecraft during that expedition said:

For me, like many other people on earth, it was quite a shock. When we went to the moon our total focus was on the moon, we were going out there to the stars, we were going closer to the planets, we weren't thinking at all about looking back at the earth, but then suddenly we looked back at ourselves and were stunned by what we saw. We received a new kind of self-awareness. As I think back on

what we did that moment may well have been the most important reason we went.

And so our global consciousness dawned on us. We witnessed earth-rise from the vantage point of the moon and the rising realization that we are all in this together, that our borders and boundaries, divisions and distinctions were not even visible from that vantage point, but rather our common home, a beautiful tear drop of a planet that holds us all; all of our struggles and strife, all of our pursuits and activities, all of our loss and our gains across all these millennia.

Such a shift in perspective that came from traveling 250,000 miles from the earth and looking back is also the gift offered by religious tradition as well. Worship on Sunday mornings and other spiritual practices should have this effect on us – that we might remember and regain and come to a larger more Godly, you might say, perspective. For too often in a week's time, in our everyday lives, does our vision become myopic and impaired, our lives and our struggles, our sorrows and fears, loom large and color how we see the world. But what our scriptures do and what our prayers are intended for and what the music is designed to break us free from those limitations, to draw us someplace deeper, to some state of awareness that is more broad and capacious, a more expansive perception of what is. Whether we are Buddhist or Christian or Muslim or Hindu this is at least part of the point of what our spiritual practices intend to do for us – to bring us from merely mortal sight to Divine sight, from human insight to God insight. It should be like standing in the park out here in front of the church and suddenly being whisked out to view where you were standing from the moon. Same person, same eyes, extremely different perspective. So too should worship - when at its best - grant to us that kind of perspectival shift.

It's something of what the disciples experienced in relating to Jesus, a major upheaval and re-orientation of their perspective. What they saw and understood of their lives, like all of us, was small, narrow, tribal, self-oriented and what Jesus broke open for them was the capacity to see from the heights of God-orientation, a perspectival shift that was disorienting if not terrifying at times. Jesus worked hard

to get the disciples beyond their near-sighted vision of the world, of who was first and who was last, who was worthy and who was not, of who was pure and who was not.

So for instance, regarding our scripture for today, children were property, as were women for the most part, and only partly human because they were not yet contributing members of the society yet and yet Jesus says you, who assume that they need to become like you, you actually need to become like them! Same thing with the early church. They too grappling with the major perspectival shift that occurred in the aftershock of the resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians speaks of this shift beautifully when he describes their narrow dividing lines and walls of separation amongst one another that were crumbling in a new oneness of Spirit and purpose. He described the view from the Moon that Jesus' spirit was giving them by saying: "We have now been clothed with Christ and so suddenly there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, but we are all one in Christ." And we might say in our day and time: "We have put on Christ therefore suddenly there is no longer citizen and immigrant, no longer republican and democrat, no longer American and Russian, no longer the company owner and the company worker but we are all one, all worthy in Christ."

It's the 250,000-miles-out-from-the-moon-to-the-earth perspective and it's the 12-inches-from-the-head-to-the-heart perspective as well.

And when we come to the communion table we should be opened to this major perspectival shift as well. To say that Jesus, who is God, was broken open for us, out of love and forgiveness and acceptance of us, is to draw ideally our consciousness from our individual struggles and thoughts and habits and monkey minds into a much greater mind and space than that, a much broader realm where we belong; well beyond the little kingdom of our own minds and so much greater than the little tyrant of our own egos. We receive the broken God here and reconstitute God in a way through our bodies into the body of God's Church. It's a strange and remarkable thing and ideally makes us realize that we are not alone, we are no longer separate, we are one with our brothers and sisters here and in fact all

across this globe, because this one table is the Lord's table and set across this earth for pilgrims and sojourners, for strugglers and achievers, for bunglers and losers and the defeated no less than for the graceful winners, for us all.

We speak languages of all sorts as we come to this table, from cultures of all forms and patterns, from perspectives of all angles and sizes, because we are all human, broken at times on the wheels of living, all in need of healing grace and of restorative mercy. This is not a table of separation and exclusion but a table of welcome and inclusion and as we come we praise God for the great diversity of life on this little blue teardrop of a planet and pray for the perspective we need to lead lives of love and grace in the days ahead.

May the view from the moon to the earth and the space from our heads to our hearts and the distance from your seats to this table remind you that God is very near, in fact closer to you than your very breath, and that we only need that perspective change to realize what we have and have had all along – the grace and love of God offered to us freely and fully that we might be channels for that grace to others. Let us break bread together...

Benediction:

May the grace of the love of the skies be thine,  
May the grace of the love of sun, moon and stars be thine,  
May the grace of the love of the earth be thine,  
May the grace of the love of one another be thine,  
From this day forth, in Jesus name, go in peace.