

There’s a magazine I sometimes read called Orion. Orion is a collection of essays, poetry, short stories, photographs and drawings, related to caring for creation and all the people within it. It’s a somewhat spiritual, somewhat scientific and always working to push one to use the “artist” side of us when considering how we might live with one another and the rest of creation in peace. In the Spring 2002 issue, twelve people were asked to respond to this question: At the beginning of this new millenium, what is missing in the world to make things right? Where do we start if we want to make this world a saner, healthier, more peaceful place? If there is a single impulse we could focus on that might really make a difference, what would it be? The responders were a poet, a rancher, teachers, activists, writers, scientists and a theologian, who all wrote a very brief, one page essay to explain their choice of word to answer the questions. Their answers ranged from honor to responsibility to listening, hardness, love, grace, militancy and a parable, and all of them were worthy of the page they used to justify their thoughts. But there was one answer, given by Thomas Berry, a Christian theologian, that really touched my heart: Wonder.

“I look forward to a renewal of a world of wonder,”

Berry writes.

“As children the truly great moments of our lives were those when we watched the evening sky or wandered across a meadow to wade in a nearby creek, the moments when we were outside playing games or learning the languages of the flowers and trees, the birds, the insects, the butterflies. IN this way we learned something of the numinous world present thought our natural surrounding, the world beyond human explanation, the world that we can express only in our stories of spirit presences.

“This was a world of play and delight and laughter, the world of poetry and storytelling, of music and dance and freedom. . . . It was a sacred world, a world that could not be bought or sol, could not be made by humans. It was the world that brought us into being, nourished and educated us, guided and healed us, and in the end brought us safely through the turmoil and struggle of this earthly existence into an abiding and serene world beyond what we could find here. . . .

“So now my hope is that the wonder we experienced in childhood will return to quiet our restless souls in this new age of anxiety that has descended upon us.”

I agree with Dr. Berry and I would get more specific and say that to see God present in all life is to see through the eyes of wonder.

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth,”
sings the Psalmist.

“When I look to the sky, the moon
and the stars that you have established;”

The Psalmist saw life with the eyes of wonder, like a child does and he saw that God is the Source of all its beauty and power and life. Do you remember when you were a child and you looked upon objects as if you have never seen them before? Or have you lately watched a child watch the world? Most of us adults have forgotten the sense of wonder, seeing the world and ourselves as the miracle it is. But young children are surprised by it all. They can sit and look at their hand or an object for long periods of time as if they were the most fascinating object, and they can laugh and laugh and laugh.

In ages past, it was said that a prophet was an adult child. Prophets were adults who had grown and matured intellectually, but had not lost the sensitivity and surprise and amazement that a child constantly experiences.

To see God with the eyes of wonder is to become a child again. I’ve never quite figured out precisely what Jesus meant when he said that to enter the Kingdom of God you must become like a child. Of course, there could be a dozen meanings in that saying but it may very well be that to become like a child is to recapture the gift of wonder and awe and mystery, to see that life is filled with wonders from the Creator of it all. Who is too mature to be in awe of the mountains or the stars at night? Who is so “grown up” to not be amazed and humbled at the birth of a baby? Who is so hardened to not stand in wonder at the edge of the ocean as its endless waters touch the sky? Who is so intelligent and sophisticated to not stand with mouth open at the beauty of an opening flower and know that God is behind it all?

Einstein wasn't. "The finest emotion of which we are capable is the mystic emotion. Herein lies the germ of all art and all true science. To know that what is impenetrable for us really exists and manifests itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty. . . . This knowledge, this feeling, that is the core of the true religious sentiment. In this sense, I consider myself among the profoundly religious men."

Seeing God with the eyes of wonder.

The rest of this sermon was devoted to an eight minute slide show set to music from "A Winter's Solstice V", track 13, Doo'it'saa'da (Another Silent Night), and, "Amy Grant: A Christmas to Remember, track 11, Agnus Dei.

Slide Presentation

Use "A Winter's Solstice V #13 "Another Silent Night" and
"Amy Grant: A Christmas to Remember" #11 "Agnus Dei"