

Rev. Yugo Suzuki's sermon

7/19/09 "A Sense of Wonder" Psalm 8

The 16th century French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote that what makes human life truly human is "a sense of wonder." "A sense of wonder" is a profound self-awareness that my life is given to me; I was placed on this earth by a power greater than myself that loves me.

Pascal says that this sense of wonder is one of the essential requirements that make human life truly human.

His thinking is based on the biblical understanding of human beings. Psalm 8 is a good example. It begins with the following adoration. "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

For the Psalmist, the whole universe is God's precious creation. "You have set your glory above the heavens. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

Human beings are the most precious creation of God, says the Psalmist. "You have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor."

In short, according to the Psalmist, you and I are not accidents of nature. God has placed us on this earth with a clear purpose and loving intention.

Jesus brings this Psalmist's affirmation even closer to us. God is the creator of the moon and the stars, of course. But he is also the creator of lilies of the field and the birds of the air. "I tell you," Jesus said, "not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these."

God loves the grass of the field and birds of the air. So how much more does God love you who are human? Much, much more!

The trouble with us is that we have lost this sense of wonder. We live as if we are products of nature pure and simple. We live as if presupposing a transcendent power, as the life-giving source is an illusion or a crude form of superstition.

But isn't the loss of a sense of wonder a cause of our inhumanity to humans? Isn't it a cause of injustice, war, and violence that constantly mar us?

The Japanese Christian poet named Genzo Mizuno personified this sense of wonder. Some of you may remember that I have talked about him before from this pulpit.

Mr. Mizuno had to spend his entire life bedridden due to a childhood illness. So from the world's perspective, his was a useless existence and a burden to society. And yet, his poems are filled with a sense of wonder. He knows that he is an object of God's infinite love and mercy. Listen to him in the following poem.

"A high school student came to see me. She held my skinny hands in hers with tears in her eyes. In her I saw Jesus. I heard him say, 'I am your friend.' My soul became clean. I was cleansed. What wonderful love! It's good to be alive."

"What wonderful love! It's good to be alive." We are to make his sense of wonder our own. This is the faith that braces us for the living of these days.

Thanks be to God.