

ARE YOU IN AWE?

Maybe the real question is – **what are you in awe of?** **Awe** is a word defined as “a strong feeling of respect or amazement brought on by something that is beautiful or sacred.” In today’s culture one of the most overused words is “awesome”. We have all heard it misused in reference to something neither sacred nor beautiful.

Today’s Old Testament reading gives us an *awesome* insight through Isaiah’s view of God in His temple – something truly sacred and beautiful! Numerous passages in the Old Testament declare this awesomeness of God. The question for us today is, **what do we stand in awe of?** *Do we really hold a place in our hearts and spirits where we respect God?* “. **Actions can speak louder than words**” we say, so when we enter the sanctuary. **In the very place where we come to worship God, what is our attitude, our actions?** The Jewish people believed that God indeed did inhabit the temple, but Jesus came to declare God could not just be limited to the temple!

I can recall as a small child entering the sanctuary, whispering because I believed God was there and I certainly did not want to disturb Him! Silly, a child’s thinking? Maybe, but you know maybe it wasn’t such a silly idea, after all didn’t Jesus himself say in Matthew 18:3 *“truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

We grow up and we seem to lose that child-like behavior, yet in many ways keep our childish behavior! *“child-like” -- meaning like that of a child; especially having or showing the pleasing qualities such as innocence or trust – associated with a child or childhood.* I would add to that being in awe. There were times when we would have enjoyed being able to read the thoughts of a child when they saw for the first time a puppy, a flower or fireworks. You could tell by the expression on their face the wonderment and awe they must be feeling. Isaiah must have been sensing that “awe” when he looked upon the Lord in his temple!

I have said more than a few times that **religion is not about rules but more about relationships with God and others. It is not about money, but about mercy, it is not about rules, but freedom.** A sermon could be made about any one of these subjects, **but I believe that, when we begin with and understand the relationship that God desires with us, the other subjects “fall into place” in our lives.** For if we have somehow lost or never really nurtured that relationship with God then just maybe we are on auto-pilot and going through the motions whether it be on a committee, an event or sadly on Sunday morning. **For no matter what age if here inside we do not sense joy, a love, or child-likeness in our faith, we need to recapture that which has been lost or been dulled.**

Next Sunday the service time changes, will we attend, looking at it as an opportunity to worship and give back to God the gratitude for that which He has given us or will we find an excuse, any excuse not to attend?

Today is Communion Sunday, a celebration that John Wesley would stand and be in awe, but not for the reason you may think! **Wesley's vibrant faith saw Communion, frequent communion, as an opportunity to strengthen his relationship with God. He was in awe of the mystery of this sacrament.** He spent many hours conversing in his society groups and other religious groups expanding his understanding of Communion.

Have we in this age of media become complacent, even lazy in our pursuit of knowledge of God? I don't mean you have to study theology, **but how much time do we allot to further our relationship with God?** When we do, we may discover that awe that Isaiah experienced or the disciples must have had viewing Jesus' Transfiguration, Resurrection or Ascension.

There are roadblocks ready to hinder us in our relationship with God, if we let them. One that can really sneak up and "capture" us is "**familiarity**". We, who have been around for awhile, can be prone to this more so than the young. We can tend to say "**we have heard it all before**" – the Christmas story, Easter, the parables, Old Testament stories like David and Goliath, but when we have that relationship with God and we know by witness of the Holy Spirit within, that each story or event each time contains some new nugget of truth for us at that specific time. **After all, it is the Living Word and when we study it our faith will be strengthen.** For younger people who have become familiar with stories of the faith ask someone else, even challenge them to share their insight. Never count out the fact that God works through others in our faith community too as it says in Ephesians 4:12 "*their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*" We all, each one of us has gifts to share in the body of Christ called "Centennial"!

Two roadblocks that seem to pair well with each are **busyness and circumstances**. These two roadblocks are quite effective in drawing away from that which would build our relationship with God and realize how awesome He is, for who He is, and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ. A wise person told me one time that "*people will always make or find time for those things they deem important*". I thought when she told me that, that it brought home that verse in Matthew 6:21 "*for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*"

We can drop God farther down the priority list and make very reasonable excuses why we did it, but you know each and every one of us is at the top of His list!!! And that is something really awesome!!!! We have the same hours in a day, how do we spend it? **If our relationship**

with God is important then why can't we find time to grow it? Sometimes when I view this whole subject of holding God in awe, I think how can we hold someone in awe that we don't know?

Now I have noticed that performing a non-member wedding here that you realize that there are people that are coming in a church for the first time and can we expect them to be in awe? Not when their frame of reference is very different from ours. Oh, if they entered a huge cathedral they be impressed because of its architectural features, but more than likely not cross their minds that such a structure was built to the glory of God!

Centennial is a small white country church that sits on a hill, it is not a cathedral, but it was built to the glory of God. Founders' desire to have a place to worship and demonstrate their thankfulness to a God that has blessed them with family, good ground and crops and much more! We cannot lose that wonderful history of a people who worshipped God from their hearts! People who were in awe of the creator, a provider, and yet still a Father who we can come to and he will listen and care.

There is currently a young man, Brad Van Wyk in the hospital with a wife, Brooke, by his side. Busyness and circumstances could easily misplace God in this situation, but from the text messages i have read from her, you quickly come to realize that her God, our God is right there in the thick of things. Brooke knows the power of prayer no matter how it is answered. I have been told she has been through a number of circumstances that in ones' life may turn them away. I would venture to say she has a strong relationship with God, holding him in wonderment and awe. She knows the height, the length, the width and the depth of his love for her and it is awesome!!!

Now in Isaiah when we take another look at the verses reading the glorious description of God in the Temple, see also see how Isaiah realizes how unworthy he is to be in God's presence. Then God takes the initiative, sends a heavenly creature with a glowing coal from the altar and touches Isaiah's lips and declares "*see, this has touched your lips your guilt has departed and your sin removed*".

Shortly in Communion we will take the bread and the juice, and because God has sent His Son, the blood of Jesus has touched us and our sins are forgiven and are free of guilt. Be reminded in the mystery of Communion through these elements our relationship is restored and renewed. We are as Psalm 51:7 says "*purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*" This is the mystery of Communion, God using earthly elements as a vehicle to reach out and draw us closer to Him. No wonder John Wesley looked upon frequent Communion not as an inconvenience to muddle through but an opportunity and he held in God awe because of it.

There are many "creations" of man we hold in awe – the car, electricity, cell phones, the computer, and much more, but ponder this – where did all those ideas come from - people with a

God-given brain and the vision and talent to use it. **Take time to think of your own body “*how fearfully and wonderfully made*” and despite many human advances remains a mystery to us. Look at the flowers, trees and plants that grow, the color of animals, the shapes, the taste of fruit all made by our creator – those are reasons to hold God in wonderment and awe!!!!**

Earlier I mentioned that when we have that relationship with God other things will fall into place. In our reading from Acts today we are witness to that. Two things happened – the people received His Word and were baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit. They had a relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father. What the people had there was continuous devotion to teaching, fellowship, prayer, and Communion. Then in verse 43 “*and everyone kept feeling a sense of awe*”. For many signs and wonders took place.

Do we miss signs and wonders today? Are we looking for them? Are we in awe of...God and those things he has blessed us with?

Amen.