

New Kilpatrick
Sermon
Psalm 8
25th October 2015

Spirit... do not leave us the same... May word and thought... longing and promise... find a new way to lift and inspire our souls... that we might find the fullness of life... Come and renew us now... So be it... Amen...

Autumn has become a feast of wonder this year has it not?... the leaves lightening to lime... just as someone magically spills marmalade down them... and a whole branch at a time is turned that apple jelly orange... It really awakens the poet in you... yet even the poets are often silenced with awe at this time each year... this brief exhilaration of beauty... before the emptiness of winter...

Perhaps that's not your thing... Perhaps you find awe in the Gaudi's great basilica of Barcelona... which this week entered it's final stage of completion... after 150 years in the building... The last 6 towers to be completed by 2026... but even unfinished is an awe inspiring building... the imagination of someone who lived one and a half centuries ago...

Perhaps Gaudi is more awful than awesome... Maybe your awe is found in more popular things... Perhaps you find awe in Jay McGuiness on Strictly... without apparently knowing how good he is... his feet and legs swinging their way to the series first 10 fortnight ago... and even Craig Revel Horwood offering a 9... now surely that alone is an awesome thing...

But wherever we find awe in this world... do we find it here in the bread and wine... Is that one of the words we use for this common meal... where all we have is bread... and that is all it is... and wine... and it is not even fermented... Is 'awe' one of the words we use for this table?...

The Protestant tradition is based on setting the Word of God free... The reformation began with a hope and desire that God's own People would read and explore the Bible for themselves... in the vernacular... We set up schools... we trained people... we reduced the number of communions from daily... to twice yearly... because we had to have some sense of knowing what we were doing...

That was emphasised in the past... with everyone requiring to have a communion token... before being allowed to attend communion... a token given to you by your elder... that was

proof you were of sound living... that you came to the table in the right mind and with the right intent...

One minister in the 1700s announced there would be communion in a fortnight's time... only to cancel it because he found the congregation's comprehension was such that they were not ready to receive... He announced instead that communion would be served when he had visited and instructed each member in the congregation to a suitable standard... One and a half years later... communion was served...

Gone are these days... but still the balance seems to be on being able to understand something... rather than being inspired by something... Of course you can be inspired with knowledge... Indeed the more we have come to know... the more inspiring our universe has become... but in approaching this table... there is something in us that says... we come here first because we have learned what it means... before being inspired with what happens...

I remember being small... in the final year of Sunday school... and it was our privilege to be allowed to sit in the gallery to watch communion... It was never the most inspiring service... except the bit when the bread and wine were distributed... and I would sit on the edge of my pew when the bread and wine were shared... I was fascinated...

But the best bit of the service... the bit I still don't understand why it was so significant... was running down the stairs afterwards... before the glasses had been collected... finding one that hadn't been finished... and after looking over my shoulder... to check no one was watching... finishing it off...

I probably thought I was doing something wrong... I was doing something wrong... I wasn't a member... I hadn't done the membership course... I didn't understand what I was doing... though I think I did... There was something inspiring about it... and in truth... still is...

What happens here... we cannot fully understand... and never will... because you cannot understand grace...

You cannot understand the love this table breaks open... of a love that gives of itself... unconditionally... without seeking return...

Surely love doesn't care if we fully understand... or if we are members... or if we are Presbyterian or Anglican or Catholic... or even Muslim or Hindu or Humanist... because ultimately... bread and wine are for the brokenness of the world... and not some special privilege for those who understand... in a particular way... Jesus didn't die for only a certain few...

The wonder of story in the bread and wine... is that power of it is most fully seen not in those who understand... but those who need... those who need to know forgiveness... who need to know they are included... need to know the love is mindful of them... that in all this big universe... in all the events that go on in the world... in all the politics and economy and struggles of the world... all of which are bigger than us... regardless of gender... sexuality... marital status... from migrants to trafficking... the bread and wine say... each of us matters... each of us is the recipient of a love that gives its all for each one of us... unconditionally... as if we were the only one here...

And this is the wonder of this table... The psalmist gives us language to speak of that... to allow us simply to be amazed... before we understand... to invite us to bring on the wonder... where trust and faith are crucial... Perhaps wonder is the more honest way to God... because wonder doesn't limit God...

We begin an enquirers' class this evening... and we will talk of what we believe... We will talk of what we have come to understand... over the generations... about this table... about church... faith... and God... But that brings us only to the beginning... The greater part of faith is the wonder after follows... The awe of what has been done in this story of bread and wine... and every story we use to speak of love... is what keeps faith alive...

When we consider the heavens... the works of your fingers... the moon and stars... that you have set in place... What are humans that you are mindful of them...

Here are the table... is the story that plays out the Psalmists thoughts... God notices... Here God is mindful... God gives everything...

The bread is for you... not because you or I can understand that truth... but because we can still wonder at the love that does it all again...