

Let us stand in awe

Luke 5:1-11, Philippians 2:1-13

September 28, 2014

He was calling them. He is calling you. To what?

What do you see?

Look again! Look closer! What do you see? Do you see evidence of what you cannot see, intimations of what you cannot comprehend? Do you see things that hint at a kind of wonder and beauty so extraordinary, so sublime, that your eyes simply cannot bear the sight?

What do you hear?

Listen again! Listen closely! What do you hear? Do you hear echoes of what you cannot hear, intimations of what you cannot understand? Underneath and above the spoken words, in and around the music played and sung, do you hear whispers of a knowing far beyond human knowing, words that we cannot speak, songs that we cannot sing? Do you sense, not hear but sense, the presence of a song, wondrously beautiful and without beginning or end, a song sung by a voice immense and deep and beyond human hearing, a song that literally holds the universe together and sets its rhythm?

What do you feel?

Close your eyes! Pay attention! What do you feel? What do you feel that you cannot see and cannot hear and cannot fully understand? Can you sense, do you feel, the presence of the one whose name is greater than any other name, the one who promised to be present here among us?

What do you feel? What do you hear? What do you see?

Peter saw enough, enough to fall on his knees. Do you see enough?

*He became like a human being
and appeared in human likeness.*

*He was humble and walked the path of obedience
all the way to death --
his death on the cross.*

*For this reason God raised him to the highest place above
and gave him the name that is greater
than any other name.*

*And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings
in heaven, on earth, and in the world below
will fall on their knees,
and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Do you see enough to fall on your knees? Or to stand in awe?

Our family watches “The Voice” together, and we were watching last Tuesday evening when Maiya Sykes sang. The thirty-six-year-old Yale graduate sang “Stay with Me” and as she was singing coach Pharrell Williams rose from his chair and stood. And I knew what he was doing. I knew exactly what it meant, because I had seen it before.

I had seen it at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and other African-American churches in Waterloo -- ministers rising from their seats, worshippers rising from their seats, standing to express their approval, to show their affirmation of the preacher’s message.

It is not a standing ovation at the end of a performance, but a rising in the midst of it, a sign of assent, acknowledgement, affirmation, giving honor to what is being said and to the one who is saying it, but, most of all, giving honor to the One about whom the preacher preaches, standing in the presence of something ... holy.

Let us stand in awe.

We sit to listen and to learn, but we stand to give honor. Originally, Orthodox worshippers stood for the entire service. Their sanctuaries had no seats or pews, because the focus of an Orthodox service is worship -- paying homage, giving honor, standing in awe of the Holy One, the One beyond seeing, the One beyond hearing, the One from whom all things come and in whom all things are held together, the One who is the beginning and the end, our beginning and our end, the One true and holy God.

Let us stand in awe ...