

Natalie W. Bell  
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*Awe and Wonder*  
*Acts 2:42-47*

*<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds<sup>[1]</sup> to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home<sup>[k]</sup> and ate their food with glad and generous<sup>[l]</sup> hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

*Did you see the launch and return of Artemis II on April 1 and 10<sup>th</sup>?*

It was amazing, wasn't it?

The four astronauts doing a lunar flyby on a 10 day mission.

When they were on the far side of the moon,  
they were 252,756 miles from Earth.

*Can you even imagine?*

And you know what was most amazing?

That we were *ALL watching this together*---and *cheering* for them, together!

Not many things bring us together in this world,  
but *awe-inspiring events like this* sure do, right?

*We learned that the astronauts themselves were overcome with awe and wonder on their mission.*

The four crew members described a "*shift in consciousness*" and deep emotional response to witnessing Earth as a "*beautiful blue and white marble*" from deep space.

*Although he is not religious,*

*Reid Wiseman* said that after seeing the "otherworldly" sun eclipse behind the moon,

*he "broke down in tears" upon seeing a cross,*

saying that the experience was difficult to comprehend.

It was a truly spiritual experience, even for someone NOT religious.

*As a practicing Christian,*  
**Victor Glover** brought Bible verses and communion cups to space,  
 and he shared messages about love and gratitude during and after the mission,  
 describing the experience as *too vast* for one person alone.

*Even the PICTURES of the mission evoke awe and wonder for many of us,*  
 because it's so hard to imagine humans being so far out in space,  
 so far above the Earth,  
 just looking down on us!

*Did anyone buy special glasses and witness the total solar eclipse  
 on Monday, April 8, 2024?*

It was dubbed the *Great Northern American Eclipse*  
 And it ALSO captivated the nation—  
 with people from all over the country *watching the phenomenon, TOGETHER.*

*AWE AND WONDER—have the power to change us.*

*The early church* was certainly *filled* with awe and wonder.  
 The early believers had witnessed the miracles and ministry of Jesus,  
 They had seen the resurrected Lord,  
 And they had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—  
 Giving them power to speak in different languages,  
 and growing the church  
 from a few followers to over 3000 new believers!  
 Talk about awe and wonder!

*As Acts continues, we see that it wasn't ALL awe and wonder.*

The early church was plagued with the same pettiness and problems  
 that we face in the church today.  
 People are imperfect, just people.  
 But God continued to act, and work among them in amazing ways,  
 and the church grew, day by day.

*Other historians of the day, like Josephus, wrote about Jesus*

And the early church.  
 And you know what people said was most amazing  
 about the early group of Christians?  
 It was *their LOVE for one another.*  
 It was *the way they CARED for* one another.

Here, in Acts 2, we read that

*All who believed were together and had all things in **common**; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the **proceeds** to all, **as any had need***

Some read this to mean that they pooled all of their resources into one fund that everyone used.

*They certainly lived as one church **FAMILY**, united by faith and practice,*

Sharing their *resources, meals, and worship.*

Which was not unlike the Jewish sect living at Qumran, known as the Essenes, And other Greek groups who lived similarly.

*But unlike the Essenes and other groups, The early Christian church lived differently than the world, But they were **NOT separated** from the world.*

The Essenes and Greek groups were separate.

But the early church lived *IN the world---as **ONE community of faith.***

*Selling individual possessions was likely voluntary—not required,*

And the key sentence in our reading:

*they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need*

In this sentence, the verbs are imperfect, implying *continued action.*

In other words, they sold and distributed, as people in their community had needs, So that they could meet those needs.

Not so different than what many faithful Christians do today.

Preston Sharpe, The Art of Preaching, Good Shepherd Sunday, April 26, 2026.

*The early church was a community founded on **LOVE and CARE.***

It was a community based on *unity and togetherness—*

Which came not only from their *beliefs,*

but also from their ***ACTIONS.***

*So, what does this all have to do with US, TODAY?*

What does it mean for *our CHURCH*, and the *larger body* of Christ?

*Well, we too are called to look for the awe and wonder* in the world,

And in our midst!

Even though instances of true awe and wonder may be **RARE**, we are called *to pay attention* to the events, feelings, and people that bring us such moments.

**Why?**

**Because awe and wonder do more than help our faith,**  
They have the power to bring us **TOGETHER**,  
To inspire **UNITY**,  
To make us **ONE** body.

**When was the last time YOU experienced a moment of AWE and WONDER?**

Where were you?

What were you doing?

When we were in MA after Easter with my sister and brother-in-law,

We saw spectacular sunrises over the ocean.

Every time I was captivated, because they were different each day,  
minute by minute the colors changed from navy to orange, yellow to pink....

Every time I saw them, I would say to myself—

*Wow. God does this every single day!*

**On EASTER morning, despite the clouds and fog,**

Coming into our sanctuary and seeing all the people,

and all the little children laughing and smiling....

that too was true **AWE AND WONDER!**

It was so exciting to witness people not just singing along,  
but almost dancing in their pew!

Pastor and theologian Barbara Brown Taylor,

in her book *An Altar in the World*, writes that

*“the earth is so thick with divine possibility, that it is a wonder we can walk anywhere without cracking our shins on altars”.*

Isn't that the truth?

**God fills our world with sacred experiences—**

it doesn't matter where we are, or what we are doing....

We can be interrupted at any time by God's sacred presence.

It's like the words of English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning,

***“Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God”***

***What does that mean for US?***

It means that we can ***find the SACRED in ordinary, everyday*** moments.

While driving, or doing laundry, while spending time with a sick loved one, or laughing with friends.

We can find Jesus ***pretty much anywhere, any time.***

It just depends on whether we are paying attention,

Whether our ***eyes and hearts are open*** to it.

Is YOUR HEART OPEN?

***It means that as people of faith, we should really PAY ATTENTION.***

And start looking to find the "altars" in everyday life—

As we walk, eat, work, study, and spend time outdoors.

One of my favorite authors, professor Kate Bowler, says that

***Wonder has the ability to stop us in our tracks,***

***but we often miss it in our busy lives.***

She muses, *wouldn't it be nice to have a little notification beep on our phones, when we encounter something evoking awe and wonder?*

Now that would be great, wouldn't it?

Maybe for that we would stop!

***Because, so often we OVERLOOK OR MISS experiences of awe and wonder.***

What if we could ***cultivate the habit*** of paying attention?

Of opening our eyes to what God is doing?

***The world is full of so much BAD NEWS THESE DAYS,***

That sometimes we feel like the ***world itself is just...BAD.***

Everything is bad.

And getting worse day by day.

I dread watching news each day, because we have no idea what we'll hear or see.

In a recent podcast with Kate Bowler, Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber

pointed out that most news is ***designed to evoke NEGATIVE EMOTIONS,***

To make us afraid, upset, and angry.

And it works, doesn't it?

How ***often do YOU think that the world is a hot mess,***

and getting worse by the day?

How often do you ***hear others share that same sentiment?***

***But the truth is, all the GOOD STORIES, are ALSO the world!***

This is why I couldn't help but preach about Good News on Easter—

And people who share that for us.

Like Steve Hartman on CBS—telling us that everyone has an incredible story,

And something GOOD to share.

The way he does each week on Friday evening news.

The truth is, ***the good news we see and hear, IS REAL.***

It's more real than all the bad stories put together!

The question is, are we listening?

Do we believe it?

Do we believe that ***God continues to work?***

That ***Jesus continues to share Good News?***

That the ***Gospel is real?***

***Do YOU believe that there are sacred spaces----everywhere?***

Do YOU believe that we are called to work with God,

To bring the *kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven?*

***DESPAIR about the state of the world will NOT save us.***

Let me say that again—because it's all too easy to be overcome with despair.

It's all too easy to complain constantly about what we see and hear.

***But despair will NOT save us--- kindness, beauty, and awe CAN.***

And finding the awe and wonder---fends off the darkness.

On that same podcast, Sarah Bessey Bessey,

another author and theologian, said something profound:

***'we may not get to CHANGE the world, but we do get to LOVE it'.***

Think about that for a minute.

We might not be able to stop the Iran war, or change the hearts of leaders,

***But we do get to ACT IN LOVE.***

We do get to pray,

we do get to ***do the loving thing*** right in front of us, day after day.

***How are WE loving the world?***

How is our love working towards changing the world,

Or at least ***our little corner*** of it?

What is the next act of love that God is calling YOU to do?

***And how are WE being led by the Spirit?***

The early church was created and empowered by the Holy Spirit—  
it was the Spirit who helped them to live and work and worship together, as ONE.

***So how are WE AT FPC MATAWAN Spirit-led?***

What about our *stewardship*?

How and where do we spend our money?

Do our ministries bring healing? And hope?

Do they help us participate in God's work?

***And what about our MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES?***

Last fall at the officer's retreat,  
we discerned that God is leading us to focus  
on helping people with *food insecurity*,  
And helping *families*—within the church, and our Nursery school.

***Part of being a faithful Christian is having an awareness of God's power,  
An openness to seeing God in daily life.***

***And living in a NEW WAY.***

The early church was known as "*The Way*",

Because it was a new kind of faith and practice.

A new way—of living, eating, working and worshiping--together, as one.

***And the four activities mentioned here in Acts 2,***

Are known as the 'marks' of the early church.

Why does that matter?

Well, we have same callings, today.

We too—are called to *study the Word*.

We too are called to *fellowship* with one another.

We too are called to *break bread*—in the Lord's Supper, and in fellowship.

We too are called to *be 'devoted' to prayer*.

So this passage has a lot to teach us.

Gary Neal Hansen, Feasting on the Word, Year A, Vol 3, pg. 426.

***We cannot manufacture AWE AND WONDER,***

But we can look for it.

We can open our lives to the sacred.

*We can spend MORE time FOCUSED ON all THE GOOD STORIES,*  
than all the bad news  
that saturates our lives today.

*That is the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL.*  
And for that, all God's people can say together, Amen!