

December 17, 2023

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## How Does a Weary World Rejoice? We Are Amazed

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What amazes you? What makes you stand in wonder? For me it's usually some piece of art or a song or even a scene in a movie. And usually that amazement that wonder and awe seems to move me to tears... here's an example...

So there my wife and I were – sitting at the movie theatre – newly married– watching Saving Private Ryan and at the end you see one of the main characters – who fought in WWII – who is now a grandpa, bending down over the grave of a fallen soldier. This was the grave of a soldier who had saved this grandpa's life in the war and this grandpa has a moment of reflection. He wonders whether his life had been worthy of saving and he begins to cry. It was an amazing creative and very real moment... awe and wonder all over the place. But I'm holding it together. And then I hear sobbing... not a bit of sniffing... not a muffled cry... full on sobbing... Just a row in front of us... two guys who look the age of the character in the movie, who look like they could have fought in WWII, had lost it. The full-on shoulder deal, the tears, all of it.

And in that moment, I was overcome with amazement, amazed by their deep emotional reaction to a very real human moment. And in a millisecond, I start to lose it. And I was so unprepared that the first thing that happened was that somehow my tear ducts sent a message to my nasal cavity and even before the tears flowed, I blew one of those nose bubbles. You know... When you are sobbing you can get those nose bubbles... Totally appropriate... Actually, the only appropriate time to have a bubble come out of your nose is when you are sobbing... Everyone knows that... so it's all good... I was a mess... awe-struck by the image of deep sadness... grief and I am sure great love that these two guys must have been feeling... identifying with that character...

And that kind of stuff is what amazes me. Deep into the stuff that makes us human. Celebrating, lifting up out of the whole human experience, even the hard stuff, amazes me. You and I having the

God given ability to experience the beautiful, the majestic, the deep joy of life is amazing. And you and I also having the God given ability to walk through pain and hopelessness because God has also given us the ability to know the difference. Amazing. And this experience, this experience we call life, is for us all. Even in times when we are weary, we can be amazed. And this gift isn't for just a select few. Not just for the good enough. Not just for the special, set apart ones. We see this in the birth story of Jesus in Luke's Gospel. In the Gospel of Luke, the very first people that are told of the birth where a couple of shepherds who were up all night watching their sheep.

*Luke 2:8-11 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.*

*But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Shepherds? Whatever we may think of shepherds in Jesus' day they wouldn't been my first choice. How about Mary's parents? Joseph's brother? But we do have some thoughts about who shepherds were in Jesus' day. One of them is that they were not high up on the social ladder. But God chooses them. Chooses them. God gives them the good news. Proclaiming for all that yes, this news, this invitation to be amazed is for everyone. And to drive the point home...

*Luke 2:16-18 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.*

All who heard it? Who were these "all" people? Who do you think shepherds hung out with? All of those who were not higher up on the social ladder. This news... the invitation to be amazed... is for all of us. The word in Greek for amazed also means marvel we could also use the word astonished. We are all invited to be amazed, to be astonished at what God has done and is doing in Jesus. We are invited to be amazed, to be astonished at the news

of forgiveness that Jesus gives. Of freedom from shame and guilt that Jesus brings. We are invited to be amazed, to be astonished at the existence of hope in hopeless situations. We are invited to be amazed, to be astonished that through the dingiest and darkest of places – a stable – a place for animals was the place that God chose to bring this news this invitation. Which reminds us that in the dingiest and darkest places of our own hearts, the stables of our lives, God comes with the invitation – be astonished. And that just might come with a nose bubble, or full on shoulder shaking or come with a host of angels. But know this, the invitation to be amazed is for us all.