

St Andrew's on The Terrace 2 September 2018 Creation One Sky Sunday Pentecost 15 Readings for the Gathering

Hebrew Bible

Psalm 19:1-6

¹ The heavens declare the glory of the divine;/ the skies proclaim the work of creation./ ² Day after day they pour forth speech;/ night after night they reveal knowledge./ ³ They have no speech, they use no words;/ no sound is heard from them./ ⁴ Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,/ their words to the ends of the world./ In the heavens a tent has been pitched for the sun./ ⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,/ like a champion rejoicing to run his course./ ⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens/ and makes its circuit to the other;/ nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The Gospel

Mark 15:33-39

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). ³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah." ³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said. ³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

Contemporary Reading

Spiritual Touchstones

by [Alexander Garoutte](#) on [5 Sep 2016](#) from a series of blogs on *Journeying on the Camino de Santiago*

I slipped out of the top bunk of the creaky bed...carefully navigated my way to the bathroom through the maze of other pilgrims sleeping on mattresses on the floor of this attic... they would not enjoy being awoken at 3am....I noticed that the skylight window was open. As I looked out, I saw, for the first time in my life, the Milky Way streaking across the night sky. It was more glorious than any picture I had ever seen. More beautiful than anything I could have imagined.

For many years I have dreamed of seeing the Milky Way.... But I have always lived in bigger cities where the Milky Way is imperceptible because of ambient light. The night sky filled with stars has always represented to me my own smallness, my own dependence on God, and my own connection to the universe. These are all things I had felt I was losing in the last couple of years before walking the Camino. And here I was, visiting the bathroom in a small albergue in Foncebadón, reminded of all that I was searching for.

For me, the night sky is a source of real spiritual connection. I have many memories of looking up at the dark sky... In those moments, more than in any other, I was sure ... that there was something more to this world than what we could see with our own eyes.

Somewhere along the way, living in all these different urban environments, I had forgotten how much the spirituality of the night sky meant to me. **I forgot that when I looked up at a black sky filled with light cast off from stars trillions of miles away that I could remember who I am in a way that is both profound and unique.**

The irony of this mystical experience in the attic bathroom in the tiniest of mountain towns in Spain was that I never really needed to walk the Camino to see the Milky Way, or even to remember my connection to the stars of the night sky. I can drive out of Boston a bit to find this source of deep connection. And I'm left asking, "Why don't I do that? Why don't I take care of my spiritual self by going and finding the ways and places that connect me to my God?"

.... I haven't looked up at the sky or sat along the open ocean shore enough in recent months at home in Boston. But if I'm committed to spiritual health (and I should be), then I really must incorporate these "spiritual touchstones" into my life with greater intentionality. These are things I can always go back to, which have meaning and remind me of my own spiritual journey...

What are those "spiritual touchstones" for you? What are the places, interactions, and environments that remind you of God's love and care for you? Who are the people that bring out your belovedness? How well do you integrate those individuals, spaces, and experiences into your spiritual life? How might you bring your own "Camino mountaintop" experience into your daily life?

Reflection for the Gathering

We have just watched the sky in many forms – sunny, strewn with clouds, lit up with the setting sun, stormy, indifferent, reflecting rainbows.

As our gathering words reminded us, all humankind lives under the same sky. This round earth is surrounded with sky, light years of sky, stretching out into deepest space. There is something very equalising about all humankind living under the same canopy. Something of that suggests too that an innate justice is deserved by all human beings and other creatures on this planet. Just because we are alive, we all have dignity, we all have worth, we are all covered with this blue and grey and white and azure, turquoise and cobalt sky – and under that sky all people are equal.

In the 1983 musical *Yentl*, Barbara Streisand plays an Ashkenazi Jewish girl whose father educates her against the prevailing times in nineteenth century Poland. After his death Yentl disguises herself as a man and goes to the larger city to learn more. This, of course, gets her into interesting situations, including marriage to a young Jewish woman, though she herself, dressed as a man, has fallen in love with another Jewish male scholar. How Yentl gets round the wedding night is an entertaining section of the movie! Inevitably and eventually discovered and disgraced, Yentl flees to America. On the boat she sings of her experience in the song "Papa, can you hear me?" the song is partly a summary of her

awakening, using the sky as a metaphor of her expanding personal horizons, but also a dialogue with her deceased father.

*Tell me where, (she sings)/ Where is it written/ What is it I was meant to be?/That I can't dare
It all began the day I found/That from my window I could only see/A piece of sky
I stepped outside and looked around/I never dreamed it was so wide/Or even half as high
The time had come/(Papa, can you hear me?)/To try my wings/(Papa, are you near me?)
And even thought it seemed at any moment I could fall/I felt the most(Papa, can you see me?)
Amazing things/(Can you understand me?)
The things you can't imagine/If you've never flown at all/Though it's safer to stay on the ground
Sometimes where danger lies/There the sweetest of pleasures are found
No matter where I go/There'll be memories that tug at my sleeve/But there will also be/More to question,
yet more to believe/Oh tell me where?/Where is the someone who will turn and look at me?
And want to share/My every sweet-imagined possibility?
The more I live, the more I learn/The more I learn, the more I realize/The less I know/Each step I take
(Papa, I've a voice now!)Each page I turn /(Papa, I've a choice now!) Each mile I travel only means/The
more I have to go/ What's wrong with wanting more?/If you can fly, then soar!
With all there is, why settle for/Just a piece of sky?
Papa, I can hear you/Papa, I can see you/ Papa, I can feel you/ Papa, watch me fly!*

Songwriters: Alan Bergman / Marilyn Bergman / Michel Legrand A Piece of Sky lyrics © O/B/O Apra Amcos

Some in our world, can't even see a piece of sky from their various prisons – they wait as hostages, prisoners of war, captives of addiction, trapped in a cycle of violence, surrounded by prejudice and hate, or blinded by their own fears. Or, if they can see the sky, the sun beats down unmercifully upon their heads, desiccating them and their landscape. Or a hurricane or typhoon lashes them with rain from the same sky which sits, brightly blue above someone else's head. For Yentl, her tiny piece of sky grew as she gained the knowledge most girls were denied in her nineteenth century Poland. For others it might be that their sky expands through friendship, or a formerly forbidden love, or getting that first opportunity, or being financed into a new venture. For those of us whose horizons are broad and wide and long already, how can we facilitate and coach and mentor and support and finance and invest in those who need just a piece more sky so they too can fly? And we, here at St Andrew's with a broad liberal open sky over our heads, what are we doing with that opportunity, which has been granted us?

In the contemporary reading Alexander remembers how the breadth of the night sky reminds him of God. He also remembers that she has not taken the time or made the effort to see that night sky during this ordinary life at home. It is an unsettling experience to see ourselves as small, tiny and insignificant under the wide arching dome of the night sky – perhaps an experience of re-sizing which we might want to avoid? Alexander finds the night sky reminds him of God. We might find the night sky reminds us of the wide space within where the sacred dwells, an inner space equally as immense in its own way as outer space.

With all this space about us and within – like the blue sky by day and the starry sky at night, are we spreading our wings as far as we can? Are we making the most of the space we enjoy which has been created by our faith traditions, through education, by companionship, with trust, and increasing knowledge – this wide open space in which we are so privileged to dwell. And under the actual sky, are we sparing a thought for those whose sky is polluted and grey, whose climate has turned for the worse because of the gases we have allowed to escape into the atmosphere; who fear the next winter or the next summer because they know their crops will not grow in this different world? Yentl sings to the sky and the sea from the bow of the boat to freedom, “The more I live, the more I learn/ The more I realise the less I know” In that spirit of humility yet also in a spirit of daring, let's make the most of the breadth of the sky above us and aim to treat everyone under the sky as human beings of worth, dignity and grace. So then, everyone in our world can find more than just a piece of sky.