

# Sharing the Good News

from the pen of the Mission Interpreter



August 22, 2021, Volume 16

## Near and Far

An interesting publishing trend in the past few years is an abundance of religious books with the word “little” in the title, like “God’s Little Book for Harried Cyclists.” Similar titles exist for almost any niche group you might name. I understand why these tiny tomes are popular. Frazzled people search for quick, downloadable inspiration easily incorporated into busy lives.

But, please! ***There is nothing “little” about God!***

Life with God requires ample time for honest reflection concerning daily and problematic enigmas, or else we lapse into easy sentiment and superficial faith about as deep as a pizza pan. If Christians are weaned on a God who is diminutive, manageable and always affirming, we’ll have a hard time addressing the many questions in our lives that have no easy answers. Thomas Merton (1915-68), the Roman Catholic monk and writer, once said, “If you find God with great ease, perhaps its not God you have found.”

Watch closely for the ponderous questions in the Bible. We who desire quick-fix answers to our problems might benefit from sitting with the questions for awhile instead of attempting a rush toward unambiguous clarity that often doesn’t exist. There is a wonderful question embedded in Psalm 8 that thoughtful people have asked in one form or another for millennia. No real answer to this question is ever given. It sits there in the body of the psalm and echoes around all the evening hours of the writer. “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them...? (Psalms 8:3,4)

The Psalmist’s ancient question invites other questions of profound, life-changing depth. *Why am I here? What is my purpose? How shall we live together in this world for such a little while?* We direly need the perspective of size before the vastness of God. To know our place fosters a proper humility—life with limits, boundaries and intention.

Recall the last time you stretched out on your back gazing into the night sky, endless space dotted with a million points of light. This exercise always quiets me. Problems I’ve carried around are silenced for awhile and given fresh perspective. We are like ants hugging a small rock, hurtling at mind-boggling speed through inconceivable vastness and time impossible to measure. Think about that for very long and it will take your breath away. Self-importance is brought down to size. This is a great and important theological learning: *The world truly doesn’t revolve around me and my needs.* We are passengers, transient and temporary, who board life on earth for a fleeting ticket of time that can be measured by a blink. “A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone...” (“Oh God our Help in Ages Past,” LBW 632).

And yet, St. Augustine (354-430) said this same God and author of the cosmos “loves each one of us as if there is only one of us to love.” *The mystery of God holds both truths in balance: **A transcendent creator who fills those who take time to notice with healthy awe and a proximate, nearby savior as close as the chalice on the altar.***

Frank Honeycutt in *Living Lutheran*, July, 2019