

## The “Awesome” Time of Now

(Sermon prepared by The Rev. Philip A. Rodgers, February 6, 2022, St. Bartholomew United Church, Brampton, Ontario)

Last Friday I'm in Fortinos looking for the President's Choice artificial fire logs. They said at the desk they have them. So off I go but I don't know where to look. So I ask the first floor clerk I see and ask where I might find them. He's looks to be about 17 - thinks he's immortal - and struts like he owns the place and says “Follow me!” and take me right to them. I thanked him and told him he saved me at least ten minutes time. And he looks me in the eye and says “awesome”, gives me two thumbs up, turns on his heels and then he is just gone. He was a great help but “Awesome”? I don't think so!.

The word, awesome, is used for science. You are watching the lunar space shots. You see one of our rockets being shot into the sky with astronauts aboard and you say, “It is awesome.” You see a man walking on the moon and talking about one giant leap for mankind,

and you say, “That is awesome.”

The

word, awesome, is used to describe sunrises and moonrises and sunsets. They are awesome.

The word, awesome, is also used to capture those special moments that happen to us. I am referring to those holy moments of life. For example, if you parented a child and are with your wife, and the newborn child comes and you are there with them. The infant is placed on your arms, skin against skin, flesh against flesh, and you touch his cheeks and count his toes and it is an awesome, awesome experience. ...

The

word, awesome, is also used to describe God and experiences with God. Sometimes when you have experiences with God or see God’s miracles, the only word you can use is, awesome. For example, half-way up on the Bruce peninsula on the shores of Lake Huron side there is a rock formation we called The Breathing Rock – as the waves move in and out of the rocks you can hear air pressure form to seem like breathing.. You

go there and have a worship service. You are surrounded by 360 degrees of the beauty of nature and there is just a hint of wind or breath in the air and the seagulls are there flying and it is incredibly beautiful. One evening I visited that shore line and watched as a man in full Scottish regalia appeared carrying his bag pipes to the edge. Looking out over Lake Huron he began beating his bagpipe until he lifted the mouthpiece to his mouth and began that eirrie sound and played “Amazing Grace – how sweet the sound...” I looked to the horizon just as the sun slipped behind it leaving a stunning afterglow of pinks and grays and fading blues cascading in all directions. It was one of the most stunning, awesome moments in my life.” When you stand there on that rock, with all the beauty 360 degrees around, you say, “Our God is an awesome God.” Every person who knows God has experienced the awesomeness of God. That is what the Old Testament lesson for today is all about. Every person in every culture in every generation experiences

the awesomeness of God in a different way.

This is the way that Isaiah, in 740 B.C., experienced the holiness, the awesomeness, of God in the temple. The temple was about two hundred and fifty years old now. It was a beautiful, beautiful building. As he was in the temple, he looked up high, a hundred and fifty feet high to the ceiling. He looked up high into a vision above him. He saw God on his throne. The robes of God came cascading down into the temple as water comes cascading down a waterfall. All around Isaiah was the robe of God, flowing like streams of silk, curling around him. He looked up into the face of God, and he couldn't quite see the face of God, but he could see two seraphim. The seraphim were two winged creatures with three sets of wings. One set of wings covered the face; one set of wings covered the feet; and the other set of wings were used to fly. The seraphim were singing in their deep magical voice: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of God of Hosts." The voice rumbled, "Holy, Holy.

Awesome. Awesome. Awesome is the Lord God of heaven. Isaiah experienced the awesomeness of God. Sure! Immediately, his heart felt: “O God, you are so good. I am not good, compared to you.” And the seraphim, reading Isaiah’s thoughts, flew down to the altar and took a tong to pick up a hot piece of coal from the altar. The seraphim flew over to Isaiah and touched his lips and his heart, and said, “Your guilt is removed. Your sins are gone.” Then Isaiah heard the voice of God, “Who will I send? Who will go out into the world for me to be my people?” Isaiah, having experienced the holiness of God, having experienced the forgiveness of God, raised his hand and said, “Here am I, Lord. Send me.” ... Now that’s “Awesome!”.

It wasn’t quite that way for Peter. Simon Peter. The big fisherman wasn’t in the temple at all. He was fishing. Fishing, probably on a Sunday morning, the first day of the week, and was not having a good time out there. He hadn’t caught anything for so long. Jesus said, “Simon

Peter, let's get in your boat and go out in the lake and start fishing. Go to the far side of the boat, drop your nets deep." They went out fishing, put down the nets, and their nets were full of fish. As they were catching all those fish, Simon Peter realized that he was experiencing a miracle. Peter looked at Jesus and felt that Jesus was the holiness of God. He fell down onto his knees and said, "O Lord, you are so good. You Jesus are Lord, and I am nothing." Jesus reached down and touched him on the lips and said, "Your sins are forgiven. From now on, you will no longer catch fish but human beings for the Kingdom." In that situation, Peter experienced the holiness of God, the holiness of Christ whom he called, Lord. Holiness. Awesome!

Do you remember how it was for C. S. Lewis, the famous author of the Tales of Narnia? C.S. Lewis got in his carriage and rode from his home to a cathedral through the countryside of England. When he arrived after his

brief journey, he believed. He knew the holiness of Christ, the holiness of God. Do you remember how it was for Martin Luther? He was up in a room. Up in that room, he was reading the book of Romans, in chapter three, the verses about the grace of God. In reading of those verses, he experienced the holiness of God. A revelation an awesome manifestation of God.

One thing I know is that each person experiences the holiness of God differently, in different ways. How has it been for you? How have you felt, seen, and experienced the awesomeness of God in your life? God says to you today. "Your guilt is forgiven. Your sins are removed. And you, having experienced the forgiveness of God, having experienced the holiness of God, you now hear the words, 'Whom will I send?'" YOU, having experienced the forgiveness of God and YOU, having experienced the awesomeness of God, you raise your hand and say, "Here am I, Lord. My life is yours. Send me." Amen.