

Called to Wonder, and Creativity¹

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

September 22, 2019

by Rev. Dave Le Grand

So that was Dr. Brian Swimme, a mathematician and cosmologist summarizing what scientists know about the origin of the universe. Cosmology, I discovered, by the way, is the scientific field seeking to understand the origins of the universe. Isn't it astounding, the theory that our universe originally might have been as small as a tiny stone, yet unimaginably dense? Then, the universe exploded into its present scale – comprising trillions of galaxies. And to consider, mind-blowing, within the context of our own galaxy, our cosmic neighbourhood, how infinitesimally small we humans are, relatively speaking to planets and our sun.

Almost as remarkable to me, though, is how we humans yearn to understand the world around us, and ourselves. What tenacity, and audacity, demonstrated by scientists and mathematicians! Know about the drama around the discovery of the *Higgs boson* Particle? Crassly dubbed the “God Particle”, I found out about this discovery through a *Maclean's* magazine article. Theoretical physicist, Dr. Peter Higgs, wrote a paper about a particle that might help explain the origin of the universe, it was originally rejected. He made some adjustments to his paper, and it was accepted. Eventually 4 other scientists joined him to begin the work that ultimately led to the construction of a 17-mile-long device² deep under the ground in Europe, that whipped tiny particles around and made them collide, all for the price tag of \$4.75 billion! Two independent teams, each with more than 3,000 scientists, were set up to pursue the same research, but never were they to “talk shop” with a scientist from the other team.

On July 4, 2012, at 3am, the two teams presented their results. The results, exactly the same – 99.999% certain that they found this particle. The room burst into applause, and cameras all on the 83-year-old Peter Higgs reportedly shedding a tear. Higgs and his four colleagues had a Nobel Prize bestowed upon them for their work.³

I bet that even a brilliant scientist like Peter Higgs (it should be said that he is an atheist) must bring a deep curiosity, and perhaps a great deal of wonder about the universe, to his work. Higgs even publicly declared that he sees no reason why Theology – the conversations we have about God and the Bible – and, Cosmology – the science of the origin of the universe – cannot be compatible.⁴

Our work here, as people of faith, is to ask God questions. Not proving God or claiming that the Bible is factually true. Our work as people of faith is to *wonder*, to be curious. Wondering about questions like: *What is the nature of our Creator God?*; or,

¹ This Message was introduced by a video clip Dr Brian Swimme, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w9Ai48zxnk> [approx. 15:30 – 21:30]

² Large Hadron Collider (LHC)

³ MacLean's article, “Why the Higgs boson discovery changed everything”. <https://www.macleans.ca/society/science/the-higgs-boson-discovery-changes-everything/>

⁴ See <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/dec/26/peter-higgs-richard-dawkins-fundamentalism> for an interview with Peter Higgs on this topic.

Why are we here?; or, How do I make sense of life, love, tragedy? Asking: How can we live a meaningful life?; and, How can I make a positive difference? Theological questions, neither of which are either provable or disprovable. These are profoundly relevant questions to help us to live well, and to be in healthy relationship with all things.

What an intriguing Story about the creation of the universe we are offered, first in the Genesis Creation Story, then this wonderful perspective we hear today in Proverbs; an image of divine female, *Wisdom*, co-creating with God. Many theologians have debated this verse over the centuries:

when [God] marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside [God], like a master worker;⁵

Scholars point out that the Hebrew word translated “master worker” can also mean “little child.” At one level, wonderfully mysterious, and the suggestion that the holy might also be playful. At a deeper level, a strong case for how our Bible tradition gifts us with the suggestion that our Creator was not a solo act. God is relational, and we are to be mirror reflections of holy playfulness and community.

Remember the story found in three of our four Gospels, the one where parents bring their kids to Jesus, but the disciples shoo them away? Jesus makes this a teachable moment, offering his followers some tough love by saying: *Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.* ⁶

We don't *exactly* know what “receiving” the kin-dom means, but I think that seeing our world like a child is about wonder. It is about respecting this universe around us, and to care for it.

⁵ Proverbs 8, verse 30

⁶ Luke 18, verse 17.