

Sermon: Orbiting the Great Attractor as We Hurtle Through Space**Scripture: I Corinthians 2:1-11****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: February 5, 2023**

I want to show you a little video clip to begin my sermon, a clip of how we were told our solar system was operating in the universe and then what it actually is doing? – [PLAY VIDEO](#) – Isn't that amazing?! How can it be that we are flying through the universe like that? That we can be still and quiet like this – silence – but be going 450,000 miles per hour through the universe. That's how fast we are going. Oh and the sun dragging our planets with it is on a course traveling around the Milky Way Galaxy which will take it about 230 million years for one full rotation, which is known as a Galactic year. It is estimated that we are in Galactic year 20 since the sun and earth came into being. I wasn't even really all that aware that that was a thing, that we were even doing that! There I was writing my sermon and drinking a latte with whole milk, sometimes with oat milk – and going 450,000 miles per hour through the universe?! It is just craziness. And then our Milky Way Galaxy is traveling through space at 1.2 million miles per hour around some unknown point that astronomers call the Great Attractor.

How can it be that all that is happening and what I was taught, the image that is in my head is that the sun is sitting still in the middle of space while the earth and our sibling planets are gently rotating around it. It's something SO much more dynamic and ferocious actually, just mind-boggling.

Consider that this morning and breathe deeply – so we don't panic – and just appreciate the miracle of this moment of existence and all that's happening around us. And then to think that as we come to worship God on a quiet chilly

Sunday morning, we are speaking of the Creator of - not just this earth or solar system but - the Creator of the whole Galaxy and then how our galaxy, you know, is less than a speck of sand in context of this tiny sand-spec portion of the universe. And it's inevitable really that we will put this Creator of the Universe or universes (ugh!) into language and image and simplify our ideas of Him/Her/Them almost to the point that the reality of who it is we worship is more NOT anything like we are imagining than God is like something we are imagining.

And yet, to imagine is what we are bound to do. And the closest we can get to accurate is simply to know that whoever God is, God is TO US, meaning there is SOME relationship there. Just like our minds can only grasp so much the scale of the universe when we talk in these distances and speeds and directions but what we do know is that our earth is related to the sun in certain ways as a part of our solar system and the solar system relates as a part of the Milky Way and our galaxy relates to whatever is the whole that makes up the reality of the galaxy which booking at enormous speeds around the Great Attractor, what we realize, as mind-boggling as that is, is that there is relationship there.

And that is what is true about us and God, that while no amount of imagining will grasp the reality of God and while language will inevitably distort the truth of what God the Creator of the Universe is, on faith we are invited into this crazy-seeming notion that we are in relationship with this truth, this reality called God. So of course, as Paul writes in his letters often what feels to be in circles as he works to put the mystery of God into words, and he acknowledges that "there is human wisdom and then the wisdom of God," he says, "no one truly comprehends God except the Spirit of God, which God in fact revealed to us

through the Spirit and the Spirit does in fact reveal even the depths of God.” (I Corinth 2:11)

But here’s the thing. As explained by Paul and the Gospel writers the human being in all its tininess and irrelevancy in the scope of things received something of a telescope you might say to help us peer into the depths of God and that telescope was Jesus Christ. But that’s not quite right cause it’s not about peering into the depth of God through Jesus it’s something better than that. It’s that in Jesus Christ humanity was given a telescope of the heart not to peer into but to experience, encounter, the depths of the heart of God. Yeah, that’s it!

We can’t ultimately know God in all God’s vast reality which is more like unreality to us than reality to our minds, but we are in relationship to the reality that is God this Great Attractor. We can know by dynamics that are happening within us and around us that we ARE in relationship to something so great even though what exactly it is that we are relating to is in the final analysis a Great Mystery. And Jesus Christ came to ignite our lives and our hearts and invite us into relationship as creatures with this One who is Creator.

So Jesus is a sort of telescope or a vortex into God or our gravitational tether into the center around which we orbit, the Great Attractor, with whom our lives are in relationship whether we know it or not, it just is. We can debate all we want whether the center of the galaxy exists but all the while we are traveling at 1.2 million miles per hour around it. We can debate about whether there is such a thing as the Creator of the Universe while everything that is, is in intimate and profound relationship to Him, to Her.

A problem if we are not careful is that we can begin to have a pretty static and domesticated impression in our minds about God and our relationship

therein. It's almost like God sits here in the middle of the picture statically, all powerful and all-knowing and we little exo-planets rotate around him and send him requests and questions and get answers sometimes and goodies while he shines brilliantly there at the center dispersing his light and answering us sometimes and not other times and doling out blessings for being good and curses for being bad and so on.

But you see, that's not really what's going on is it? That's just what our 2nd grade Sunday School image of God that we've never grow out of has left us with. God sitting here and us rotating around, us ephemeral beings relating off and on to the Great Stable Unchanging One. But more like what's going on is thinking of the second image of the solar system hurdling through the galaxy, hurdling through the universe at immense speeds going somewhere that we don't know but that we are on for the ride of our lives.

In other words, God is much less a static reality than God is a movement going somewhere and we hauling along in God's vortex life. And Jesus and specifically Jesus on the cross is the key, the telescope, the gravitational tether, the sun that gives us some clue and invites us into how we are related to this movement that is God in the eternity of existence. And the movement has to do centrally and deeply – our sacred scripture and religious tradition teaches us - with the notion of sacrifice. What, you ask? I know it's a concept that is like a spec of sand in the beach of human language and concepts but our religion picks up that particular speck of sand concept of sacrifice and says this is the rock on which it all sits. Sacrifice.

One of the things that we say about the Great Attractor around which our lives rotate or are in some kind of relationship, God, the revelation that came first

from the Jews was that whatever and whoever God is, God is actually not an amorphous energy mass around which our lives rotate but God is a presence that communicates Godself to God's creation, that God speaks to be in relationship to God's creation, that whatever the universe is in all its immensity, at the heart of it is a communication and not just any communication but a communication of LOVE, a communion, and LOVE necessarily involves sacrifice on the part of the Lover.

God among other things apparently is this radical hurling of self out for the sake of others. That's what Jesus teaches us and that's what he was in his life and death and resurrection. At the heart of who this God is, is a hurling forth of Herself out for the blessing and restoring and being of creation. She's going a million miles an hour in love. And the macrocosm of that on the universal level of existence is reflected quite specifically and precisely in the microcosm of our own lives that as God is a hurling forth of love in so far as we make of our tiny little lives a hurling forth of love our speck of sand loves become a part of the hurling forth destination of all things in God, the final end in a communion of love.

And love has built into it for whatever reason, sacrifice. At the risk of generalization, women know this I think better than men because of their child-birthing capacity. What woman among you who has had children does not know intimately and painfully and completely that life and love take sacrifice of self. In that experience is the reality of God, the reality of love. And maybe that's one reason why Jesus needed to be a man, cause the sacrificial suffering of the crucifixion that gave birth to resurrection and restoration of new life in Him reflected the birthing suffering that the women around him already knew quite well. Maybe that's why it was only the women who could hang with him through

that time and all the men turned tail and ran. The women, many of whom were mothers, knew that sacrifice and suffering was necessary for the bringing forth of creation and life. And this is the heart of God. And if we want to KNOW God we too in big and small ways must LOVE and offer our lives as sacrifice as God did in Jesus.

And that somehow, wherever we are hurtling off to, this is what's going to bring us there. Such simple words – this is my body, this is my blood given for you and yet they represent somehow the very heart of the mystery of God and existence itself...