"Worshipping in the Dirt"

I'm sure by now that many of you are aware that since I was a child, I have possessed an undying love of gardening. Now, I have to give credit where credit is due because it was my mom that first instilled in my heart this love for "playing" in the dirt. As a matter of fact, there are two loves that I must credit my mom for planting in my heart as a child, the first being a love for God and the second, a love for gardening. Although she is no longer with us, each time I am greeted by the beautiful array of flowers as I pull into our driveway, I can't help but to think of how pleased she would be to see that her pastor son still gets a kick out of playing in the dirt.
This Sabbath:
August 31, 2013

Speaker:
Pr. Charles Tapp (11:15a)
"The Dream Manager"

Pr. Don McFarlane (8:45a)
"Remember Lot's Wife"

Special Musical Guests:
Carole Dorlipo, Soprano
Denique Isaac, Soprano

A reflection by Kathy Roy Johnson

The Gospel of Luke tells the familiar story of a father who sought out Jesus to heal his son. The desperate man explained that his son - an only child - was possessed by an evil spirit.

Read more>>

The Grace of Simple Things
Food for Thought

There are times in our lives when the moment is so deep, so simple, as to be transparent and effortless. Within that moment we sense that the rush of events has subsided and we, quietly grateful...

Learn more>>

Sligo By The Sea

Have you attended Sligo By The Sea yet this summer? Our services in Ocean City, Md. are running for 7 more weeks, through Sept. 28!

Read more>>

Missed Last Week's Sermon?

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Sermon Audio Archive:
Audio Archive>>
I’m sure that many of you are aware that since I was a child, I have possessed an undying love of gardening. Now, I have to give credit where credit is due because it was my mom that first instilled in my heart this love for “playing” in the dirt. As a matter of fact, there are two loves that I must credit my mom for planting in my heart as a child, the first being a love for God and the second, a love for gardening. Although she is no longer with us, each time I am greeted by the beautiful array of flowers as I pull into our driveway, I can’t help but to think of how pleased she would be to see that her pastor son still gets a kick out of playing in the dirt.

In a recent staff worship, I asked each pastor at what time each of them felt closest to God. I’m sure that you can imagine that the answers that each of them shared were as different as is each pastor. As I thought about my own question, it hit me: The place where this pastor feels closest to his Creator is when he is playing in the dirt. Now, of course I am using the word “playing” somewhat tongue in cheek. But each time I find myself on my hands and knees in my garden, I feel a sense of God’s presence that is hard to ignore. Quite frankly, this is the place where I hear His voice speak to my heart more profoundly than at any other time. I’m sure you can imagine that I have written many a sermon while playing in the dirt.

Although I have loved gardening for quite some time, it wasn’t until recently that I came to the realization that the time spent in my garden isn’t simply time spent playing in the dirt, but rather it is time spent worshipping God. You see, each time I enter that space, it is in many ways transformed into a sanctuary, a place where this fallen creature has the opportunity to connect with the creator of the universe on such a level of intimacy that in many ways transcends that of the time spent in a great edifice. Each time I find myself in awe of the beauty that I see in my garden, I can’t help but worship the One that has made it all possible. Even if it means that my worship takes place in, of all places, the dirt. Where do you feel closest to God? Is it while driving in your car or while washing the dishes? Wherever that place is for you, please know that as mundane as it may appear on the surface, it is the place where God has chosen to be with you. And wherever that is, it has become for you a sanctuary to “worship in the dirt.”
Amazed at The Greatness of God....

The Gospel of Luke tells the familiar story of a father who sought out Jesus to heal his son. The desperate man explained that his son—an only child—was possessed by an evil spirit. This spirit would cause the boy to go into convulsions. We can almost hear the desperation in the father’s voice as he explains, “It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.” The disciples had tried to heal the boy, but without success. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy, giving him back to his father. Luke then tells us, “And they were all amazed at the greatness of God!”

You can almost hear the anguish in the father’s voice as he pleads for healing for his son. How many sleepless nights had he spent trying to help this poor boy? How long had his family been shunned by family and friends because their boy “has a problem”? And now—think of the joy that father felt when his son stood before him healed! I’ll bet there was singing and dancing—not to mention tears of joy—as they were all amazed by the greatness of God!

Now fast-forward into our own twenty-first century. Think with me for a moment about those families among us who are touched by some form of mental illness. Perhaps a mother struggles with depression. Maybe a teenaged child has some self-destructive behavior that is difficult to break. Our maybe a young child has recently been diagnosed with a brain disorder, is acting and thinking troubling things and the parents have no idea where to turn.

We have only to turn to the latest headlines to know that as a nation—we have a mental health epidemic of unparalleled proportion. And as Adventists, it seems to me that we need to have a voice in helping to heal those who are impacted by this disease. Like the boy in Luke’s story—the impact of mental illness scarcely ever leaves and is destroying them.

This Fall, Sligo Church is hosting a 12-week series designed to help care givers understand how to cope when mental illness and brain disorders appear in a child or loved one. This course—which is called Family 2 Family—will be taught by Ken and Brenda Flemmer. Family 2 Family was developed by the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) and has received national acclaim. This course will meet every Thursday evening beginning on September 12th in Room 008 at the WAU Music Building across from the church on Greenwood Ave. Please contact Stephanie at NAMI Montgomery County to register (301-949-5852). If you are a caregiver of a loved one impacted by mental illness, please attend! If you care about these issue, please attend. In fact, let’s all attend. Attend—and be amazed at the greatness of God!

By Kathy Roy Johnson

Tagged with → • • •
The Grace of Simple Things

Barry Casey

I believe in all that has never yet been spoken.
I want to free what waits within me
so that what no one has dared to wish for
may for once spring clear
without my contriving. — Rainier Rilke, Book of Hours

There are times in our lives when the moment is so deep, so simple, as to be transparent and effortless. Within that moment we sense that the rush of events has subsided and we, quietly grateful, find ourselves turning in a gentle current to gaze first here and then there, and to feel ourselves lifted and set upon our feet on a new morning at the edge of a far wilderness.

Those are moments that one treasures, storing them up for the times when the days turn to rust and the air sears as we sit in the stink of traffic waiting for the light to change. There are never enough of these moments, and in time they fade, although the mere desire for them can conjure up a train of images—some unrelated to the first experience—which gradually take on an iconic weight and bearing.

I’ve enjoyed enough of these that I can string them like pearls in my consciousness, holding them up to the light and seeing how they’ve changed over the years. There is curiosity in recalling which ones marked stages in my life. They are like ancient buried ships whose mounded boundaries we circumscribe unaware until we gain the heights and look back and down and gradually discern the outlines.

For me, these moments most usually come when I’m alone in the vicinity of strangers or near a lake or river or mountain or beach. I am booked up with a scripture (the Gospels, the Tao Te Ching, the Dhammapada or the Bhagavad Gita), some poetry (Rilke, Blake, Eliot, or Stafford) and some philosophy (Epictetus, Seneca, Marcel or Augustine)—and a fine cup of strong, rich coffee. Setting off for these possible transcendences there is anticipation, but at the very least the satisfaction of a good experience. We cannot plan for these moments but we can be ready for them.

I had one such experience while on holiday visiting family in Banff, Alberta. Early on a Saturday morning, a time of special holiness for me, I moved through the quiet streets alone in the cool dawn. In search of a quiet shop with coffee, I found one—Evelyn’s Coffee Bar—on Banff Avenue. I was past the door when I noticed it, stopped and backed up. The sign said Saturday, 8 am to 9 pm, but it was 7:45 and the door was open, so I went in, the first customer of the day.

The only other person was behind the bar, a polite and cheerful young man from the East End of London by the sound of it. With mug in hand I sat in the window that fronted the street and gazed in wonder at the mountain that rose thousands of feet in the near distance. There was morning light all around—I could see it filling in the space between the peaks—but the town was in that blue shade that only exists in the shadow of a mountain that is blocking the sun. Streams of light shot from its shoulders and I knew that in minutes I’d be in the full glare of the sun as it crested the peak.

I was reading Rilke’s Book of Hours, in a translation I’ve come to revere, in a passage that carried all my longings to create:

If this is arrogant, God, forgive me,
but this is what I need to say:
May what I do flow from me like a river,
no forcing and no holding back,
the way it is with children.

By now one or two more early customers had come in. The English barista had been joined behind the bar by a young woman who spoke with a Scandinavian accent.
“Wot time are we to open?” he asked, as they worked. I could not hear her murmured reply, but he responded, “Cos I wasn’t sure if it was 7:30 or 8:00 so I opened at 7:30 just to be safe.”

Then in these swelling and ebbing currents,
these deepening tides moving out, returning,
I will sing you as no one ever has,
streaming through widening channels
into the open sea.

And then the light burst over the peak and in one astonishing moment the street in front of me, the window, my books and cup—everything was shot through with white, pure light, warm to the touch but with hard-edged shadows.

I want to know my own will
and to move with it.
And I want, in the hushed moments
when the nameless draws near,
to be among the wise ones—
or alone.

We move through this world in a sullen daze more often than not. We mind our own business, shuffling through the streets, not meeting the eyes of those around us, drifting like motes in the sun. But occasionally, if we dare to look up, if we glimpse—even in imagination or memory—the trembling, fiery annunciation of the morning, we might just be graced into joy.

I want to unfold.
Let no place in me hold itself closed,
for where I am closed, I am false.
I want to stay clear in your sight.

Barry L. Casey, a long-time Sligo member and a co-leader of the Believers and Doubters Sabbath School class, teaches philosophy and communications at Stevenson University, Trinity Washington University, and Washington Adventist University.
Sligo by the Sea 2013

Going to spend the weekend in Ocean City, MD? Need a place to Worship? Well you’re in luck! From June 29th to September 28th 2013 you can join our Sligo family on your vacation too!

Join us for Sligo by the Sea
Join us for sligo by the sea

St. Peter’s Lutheran Church
10301 Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD, 410-524-7474

Sabbath School 10 a.m., Worship Service 11 a.m.

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<td>Robb Long</td>
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Casual attire is appropriate

www.sligochurch.org