



Community

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

of Clarendon Hills

**Individual, Pre-Meeting Devotion
December 2019
Theme: *Wonder and Awe***

*I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will meditate on all your work,
And muse on your mighty deeds.
Your way, O God, is holy.
What god is so great as our God?
You are the God who works wonders;
You have displayed your might among the peoples.*
Psalm 77:11-14

Introduction to the Theme

The season of Advent brings to mind the wonder of God, our Creator, coming into the world as a tiny, helpless baby. That the God of all creation would choose to live among us, especially as one so dependent and vulnerable, should never cease to provoke awe. The psalmist reminds us that our God is the author of wonders, and that reflecting on such works is an important element of our faith.

In her book *Help, Thanks, Wow – The Three Essential Prayers*, author Anne Lamott writes about the three prayers that she finds are sufficient for all she ever needs. One of those three, the “Wow” prayer, speaks to the wonder that we are exploring in this month’s devotions. Consider some of what Lamott observes about “Wow” as a prayer:

The third great prayer, Wow, is often offered with a gasp, a sharp intake of breath, when we can’t think of another way to capture the sight of shocking beauty or destruction, of a sudden unbidden insight or an unexpected flash of grace. “Wow” means we are not dulled to wonder. We click into being fully present when we’re stunned into that gasp, by the sight of a birth, or images of the World Trade Center towers falling, or the experience of being in a fjord, at dawn, for the first time. “Wow” is about having one’s mind blown by the mesmerizing or the miraculous: the veins in a leaf, birdsong, volcanoes.

Wow, because you are almost speechless, but not quite. You can manage, barely, this one syllable. When we are stunned to the place beyond words, we're finally starting to get somewhere. It is so much more comfortable to think that we know what it all means, what to expect and how it all hangs together. When we are stunned to the place beyond words, when an aspect of life takes us away from being able to chip away at something until it's down to a manageable size and then to file it nicely away, when all we can say in response is, "Wow," that's a prayer.¹

Spiritual Practice

1. Sit quietly for a moment and bring to mind the times when you have said, "Wow" in the way Anne Lamott describes. Take some time to remember with detail what provoked your awe, and how you felt.
2. In what ways did those experiences of wonder draw you nearer to God?
3. G.K. Chesterton said, "We are perishing for want of wonder, not for want of wonders."² During this Advent season you will undoubtedly encounter God's wonders. As your spiritual practice during this month of preparation, try to notice these "flashes of grace." You might find it in something beautiful, like nature or music, in the generosity of others, in love expressed, maybe in what feels like a miracle. When you come across that "wow" moment, allow yourself to "click into being fully present," and thank God for the divine wonders which never cease.

Prayer

Holy God, you are beyond my imagination, and yet near to me in the wonders of your presence. Thank you. Slow me down and help me to stop and notice you near, so that I would turn to you and be drawn into your abiding love. By your Spirit, use the wonder of this season to increase my faith. Amen.

¹ Anne Lamott, *Help, Thanks, Wow – The Three Essential Prayers* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), 71, 72.

² <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/171864-we-are-perishing-for-want-of-wonder-not-for-want>