



## **Sermons from Northwood United Church**

**"Hold infinity in the palm of your hand"  
Job 38:1-7, 40:1-5 Mark 10:35-45  
Will Sparks                      October 18, 2015**

May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, and the actions of our lives, be acceptable in your sight O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

I first met Bill in the second winter I was in Salmon Arm. Bill was this wonderful gentle social worker who was known to write poetry while spending a day in court accompanying a client. He was intimately acquainted with the grittier, harsher sides of life, and he was a gentle soul with a vision for beauty in life.

I first met Bill that winter because in a maritime storm, his 20 something daughter slid off a New Brunswick road and was killed and they asked me to lead a service celebrating her life. As you can imagine, Bill was devastated, as was his wife Alice. The grief of a mother and father is a profound thing if you have ever seen it. Yesterday when we gathered to bid a heart wrenching farewell to Evan Archibald here, it was present in quantity. There is little to be done but just hold each other through it. One song calls it the sharp knife of a short life, that experience of the loss of a child.

Bill went away after the service, and when he got back he told me of an experience as he drove the Coquihalla highway in mid-winter. (image) He said he was just sitting alone, driving over the incredible raw coastal mountains and the thought came to him: "I am a five second gnat on the bud of existence, and with my five seconds, I am going to dance." I told you he is a poet right? Climbing over those big rugged mountains in little car after your life has been cracked open by tragedy gives things a new perspective.

I think that is the way Job must have felt after God spoke. All these feelings of injustice in the suffering he had endured. What had he done to deserve it? But God responds, and Job feels his life in the grand scheme and it feels small. Here for only a moment- small in the scale of universal time. A five second gnat sitting on that speck of earth travelling around that monster sun which is itself but a dot in the milky way. Small in the scale of the universal space. A tiny piece of bark floating on the river of Life capital L. Adversity, suffering can bring us to humble knees, as it did for Job, and perspective changes. We see things differently than we had before. Different things become important. Other things that would have fussed us seem unimportant.

And then we have the disciples vying for a place of pride at the table of Jesus. Let me sit at your right hand, be your right hand guy, have access to power, and brush with fame. But Jesus' response, like God's to Job, brings them down a peg or two. This is the servant way we are talking about here fellas, not the power play. This is the kingdom of the small and humble where the first shall be last and the last shall be first and the master will be servant of all. Instead of trying to make a name for yourself, realize that you are a five second gnat on the bud of existence, and figure out what you are going to do with your five seconds. And my way, says Jesus, is to take that five seconds and be a servant with it.

It is not an easy task to get perspective on our own life, because we are in it. (Show the cat picture) We laugh, because it is a cat and cats are funny. But what makes this really funny is that we have perspective on it. We are standing outside of the scene and we can see the difference between the reality and what the cat sees as reality. We laugh also because somehow we see ourselves in it, and we know that often we don't see ourselves, our lives, our families in scale or in perspective.

After the service today, we are going to have a congregational meeting, which we haven't had since February. And in February, Kerry was pregnant, had not had baby Sarah, Shelli was still here as office administrator working full time, we were looking for a development consultant to give us perspective on how to develop this property in a way that would fit with our mission and sustain our ministry down the road. Today things are very different. Kerry has been on Mat leave for 6 months, we have patched things along in a number of ways in our ministry with children and families, God bless the volunteers. Ingrid, our new office manager is in place .6 time and is learning the bookkeeping tasks. And we have a report from Catalyst, the development consultant. It is time to step back together and get perspective on our life, because in the day to day flow of it, perspective is a challenge.

The reality is that no one of us can do that. We need Job, who has suffered much and has a bone to pick with God. We need the success oriented disciples who are so eager to get onboard, eagerness personified. We need the cats who think they are lions and the poets who see themselves as gnats. We need to hear the stories of people who come in off the street looking for food, of people who have fallen through the holes in the social safety net. We need to feel the squeeze of loving the people caught in drug dependence on the one hand and creating a safe place for the children and their families who attend the daycare on the other. And we need to have our mission, "embracing our community with the love of Christ" right in front of us as we get perspective on our life. I hope you will add your vantage point to the mix. It will help us see ourselves and the life God is generating here more clearly.

(hand images) On the one hand, it is true, we are small in the universal scheme of things. A five second gnat. On the other hand, we have a life to live, a mission to engage, a divine calling as a community. We need to see that though we hold only a small piece of a grand gospel, it is our piece, and in that small piece is divinity, is beauty, is love, is... well, eternity.

In the words of another poet, William Blake:

"To see the world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour"

Amen