

October 2, 2016  
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

## **Sermon - "Morning Glories"**

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God is amazing!

I say that at least once a day.

I am continually in awe of God's power in our lives.

For example, one morning a few weeks ago when I went out for my walk I noticed the beauty of beautiful, blue and white morning glories growing on our garden fence.

As I studied that bloom, the intricacies of the pattern, the depth of the color, the transient nature of the blossom, I said, "God is amazing."

Later, perhaps the same day, Joe was practicing with his new camera.

He took a picture of cricket that had found it's way into our kitchen.

As we studied the photo of the brown and white insect against the plain background of the wall we were intrigued by the intricate patterns of design on the wings and body of this little bug. 'Amazing.'

This past week Joe and I spent some time in Maine.

Nature is the focal point in this beautiful part of New England.

From the just-turning foliage, to the peaks of the White and Green Mountains as you drive north, to the calm shores of Sebago Lake, there is much to inspire both awe and humility.

It is not just nature that manifests the power of God.

As I put the prayers together for this morning's service they seemed to be drawn right out of the news headlines.

The reference book that I use for much of the service preparation, however, was written in 2001 – how could it be that it is speaking so directly to our lives today.

The scripture passages for this morning, Jerusalem's lament over the loss of the city reflects a time thousands of years ago... thousands of years ago and it could have been a description of what is happening on our city streets today.

I come away from this with the beauty of the morning juxtaposed on the violence in our streets and I cry out for God.

I know that God has the power to change the world, but I also know that God delegated much of that power to us.

So yes, God can create a morning glory and a cricket, even a mustard seed, but it is we, God's created beings who have been charged with carrying out the task of tending to this earth and all of its creatures.

Jesus says 'When you have done all that you were ordered to do, say "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done."

The point Jesus makes in this passage is that we have responsibilities in this life to carry out God's work.

One author said God provides the boat and the oars, the rest is up to us.

We are not to do only what we are told, the bare minimum – we are to seek new, creative ways to bring God's love to the world.

It is not enough to show up at church, or attend a committee meeting.

It is not enough to sing a song of praise or utter an occasional prayer.

No, what Jesus is looking for is people who go beyond the visible, beyond the tangible, people whose hearts are seeking to live out the good news with their lives.

The Psalmist and the author of Lamentations give us a clear picture of what happens when we don't take this responsibility seriously and abandon God.

Our cities fall.

We forget how to sing.

We weep bitterly in the night with no one to comfort us or wipe our tears.

We wander.

We are lost.

Into that desolation, God sends the morning glories.

God sends us a message that all is not lost.

God reminds us that we have been created and gifted with the ability to change our circumstances.

We must heed these messages.

It is at our own peril that we forget God.

Lamentations is characterized as an 'eloquent, poetic expression of the exiled Israelites' sense of bewilderment, anguish and loss' written six centuries before Christ.

Think of the 65 million refugees the United Nations reports are wandering the earth today.

Surely their song of lament echoes that of our ancestors.

Bewilderment, anguish, loss.

Is this the world that we want to live in?

Friends, we have a responsibility to use our gifts and talents to leave this world a better place than we found it.

God has entrusted us with the tasks of caring for one another –mending each other’s wounds.

We are to tend to the earth.

If we adopt the attitude of the lazy slave who only does exactly what he is told and nothing more, we will be the next ones wandering the earth.

If the earth is still here.

When we gather at the communion table, as we just did, we are nourished and empowered to go out into the world, in Christ’s name, seeking justice, offering mercy.

Whether we are feeding a hungry person, helping someone find their way, or simply being nice to people we encounter – everything we do makes a difference.

I am worried about our country.

I am frightened by the divisive language and the violence.

I am concerned about what our children are learning about others.

Two weeks ago I was in the checkout line at LaBonne’s.

There was a man two people ahead of me in the line.

He was being rude to the person checking him out.

He spoke loud enough for me to hear, so I guess he wanted people to hear his racist slur – perhaps it made him feel powerful.

I was sick.

Do I confront this man?

Do I say, ‘I am offended by your behavior?’

I didn’t say anything to the man, but when it was my turn at the register I said ‘I’m sorry’ to the clerk.

I felt that all I could do was acknowledge that I noticed and did not condone the hateful behavior.

I have been troubled by this incident since it happened.

If I, a privileged, educated, respected member of the community cannot confront bigotry and hate in the market – where are we headed?

What sort of world are we creating?

God created us out of love.

Love is the prevailing message of Jesus Christ:

Love of God, love of neighbor and love of self.

If we veer to far from our created purpose we will self-destruct.

We know from biblical history that God does give second chances, but relying on God's grace instead of our own abilities is dangerous.

We have been given all that we need to build God's kingdom on earth.

We can choose to share our resources.

We can choose to live in peace.

We can choose life over death.

Why don't we?