The wonder of God is within and around us, humming in every atom, neutron, and proton. There is nothing that does not contain this miraculous humming, and it’s been humming since the beginning of time. God created the universe to hum! When God created the heavens and the earth, when in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, everything hummed! Through the proclamations of the prophets, through Elizabeth and Zechariah, through Mary and Joseph, everything hummed! Through each of our lives, up to and including this moment of worship, the universe is humming! Wonder is within and around a weary world and weary people; the universe hums and it is worthy of our attention.

Each week in Advent, we ask the question, “How does a weary world rejoice?” And each week, it feels like the news gets heavier and harder to bear. One Sunday to the next may only add to weariness on top of weariness. Modern life challenges the biblical notions of hope, peace, joy, and love; and yet, hope, peace, joy, and love are what we hold onto in this season of the church and as people of faith. We celebrate the radical nature of God’s incarnate hope. We proclaim the impossibility of God’s healing peace. We experience the wonder of God’s indescribable joy. We cling to God’s love which keeps the universe humming.

So, I ask the question again, “How does a weary world rejoice? If we allow ourselves to be amazed by God’s love, surprised by God’s joy, and in tune with the humming of the universe, we may find just the hope we need for our weariness, just the awakening to call us forth from our numbness, and just the gift that leads to renewal, all of which might turn into indescribable joy.

With all that is going on in the world, it may seem impossible or even inappropriate to be amazed and to rejoice. Yet, knowing the care and beauty with which God designed the biggest and the smallest pieces of creation, how can we not be amazed and rejoice? This is the paradox of Christmas, perhaps this year more than ever. The darkness and power of empire and occupation, the reality of displaced and fearful people, children born into violent regimes and unjust systems is as real today as it was in Jesus’ time. And yet, once again, in the Christ Child born among us, God gives us a sign and the promise that the darkness cannot overcome the light.

There are times in our lives when we can feel the universe humming. Maybe it’s one of those moments when time slows down and we see clearly what will happen next, like catching the game-winning ball. Or we experience something so awe-inspiring that we must stop and take a breath so we can take in the magnitude of what is happening, like the birth of a child. Whenever we are amazed by what is happening, we find a way to rejoice: “The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced” (Psalm 126:3). Luke’s Gospel emphasizes this amazement, along with joy and wonder, while telling the birth story of Christ. The Greek word for amaze can also be translated as “to celebrate God’s grace together.” When we celebrate God’s grace together, in wonder and awe, we become part of the humming of the universe.

Sharon Salzberg describes awe as “the absence of preoccupation.” When we allow ourselves to be amazed, we open ourselves to receiving what God will offer us and we hum in harmony with the universe. The angels hummed with the universe as they sang God’s praises and told the shepherds the good news of Christ’s birth. The shepherds hummed with the universe when they visited Jesus and went out to tell the world of the Savior’s birth. The Magi hummed with the universe when they saw the star and followed it to find the Christ-Child. Mary hummed with the universe when she said “yes” to bearing the Son of God. Joseph hummed with the universe when he accepted Mary’s pregnancy and made the choice to be part of this unconventional family.

Just as Adam Frank asked, “Now what?” when he realized that the whole universe is humming, so, too, do all who hear of Christ’s birth, again, tonight, as “now what?”. On this night, we feel the world humming, in wonder and in awe, in hope and in expectation at what God will do next.

In these days of uneasy darkness and weary waiting, the universe does not seem to be humming in harmony. It does not seem like the perfect time for the fulfillment of God’s promised hope for the world. But then again, maybe it is exactly the right time for God to come and do something unexpected! The writer Madeleine L’Engle’s captures the humming, the wonder and awe, and the hope-filled expectation in her poem, *First Coming*.

God did not wait till the world was ready,

till…nations were at peace.

God came when the Heavens were unsteady,

and prisoners cried out for release.

God did not wait for the perfect time.

God came when the need was deep and great.

God dined with sinners in all their grime,

turned water into wine.

God did not wait till hearts were pure.

In joy God came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.

To a world like ours, of anguished shame

God came, and God’s Light would not go out.

God came to a world which did not mesh,

to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.

In the mystery of the Word made Flesh

the Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane

to raise our songs with joyful voice,

for to share our grief, to touch our pain,

God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

In a world that makes us weary, it can be hard to rejoice, to find connection, to hope, to wonder; but as we go out into the broken world that is humming and wonder-filled, may we be amazed that God does not wait. May we be amazed by this thing God is about to do in a weary and tarnished world, when the need is so great, when the stakes are so high, and may we commit in action and in prayer as a response to the question “What will become of this?”

Blessing: May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the Shepherds, the determination of the Magi, and the peace of the Christ child. May you hum in harmony with the universe, and may Almighty God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. Amen.

Sources:

* Adam Frank, “Scientists Found Ripples in Space and Time. And You Have to Buy Groceries,” in *The Atlantic,*June 29, 2023, obtained online at: [**https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2023/06/universe-gravitational-waves-nanograv-discovery/674570/**](https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2023/06/universe-gravitational-waves-nanograv-discovery/674570/), November 18, 2023.
* Madeleine L’Engle, *First Coming,*obtained online: [**https://theadventusproject.wordpress.com/resources/poetry/madeleine-lengle-first-coming/**](https://theadventusproject.wordpress.com/resources/poetry/madeleine-lengle-first-coming/), December 8, 2023.
* Inspired by the sermon, “How Does a Weary World Rejoice?” found on <https://www.westminstermpls.org/how-does-a-weary-world-rejoice-we-allow-ourselves-to-be-amazed/>. November 6, 2024.

**The Universe is Humming**

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2024 Luke 2:1-20

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

In a piece written last year in *The Atlantic* magazine*,*Adam Frank suggested that the whole universe is humming all around us. Frank then asked the question any of us might upon receiving this revelation, “Now what?” In his article about gravitational ripples through time and space, Frank described the work of the NANOGrav team, a group of astronomers at the North American Nanohertz Observatory for Gravitational Waves. For fifteen years, these scientists studied their machines and data to prove, as Frank says, “that something miraculous — something wonderful — is happening right under our noses.”

Their belief is that “Every star, every planet, every continent, every building, every person is vibrating along to the slow cosmic beat.” Through research, the team found that every proton and neutron in every atom, inside each one of us and inside everything is “shifting, shuttling, and vibrating in a collective purr within which the entire history of the universe is implicated. And if you put your hand down on a chair or table or anything else nearby, that object, too, is dancing that slow waltz.”

Okay, I know we all want to do it: to reach out and put our hand on the nearest object. If we place our hands down on the pew or the couch or chair supporting us, we will not be able to feel any vibrations we have not felt before. But now that we know that God designed the world to hum, it changes the way we understand and feel the world around us. Knowing that the universe is humming changes what we think and know about and our place in the world. Just think what a humming, vibrating world implies, what it changes, what it reveals!

What if we allowed ourselves to be amazed by the slow cosmic beat of all of creation? As Frank says in the article, “All of a sudden, we *know* that we are humming in tune with the entire universe, that each of us contains the signature of everything that has ever been. It’s all within us, around us, pushing us to and fro as we hurtle through the cosmos…Perhaps the experience will be different now that you know how the rhythm of giant black holes in distant galaxies also beat out a time in the trees’ gentle swaying.” Frank concludes that the universe is a “vast symphony,” and this is a reminder “that the world always has been, and always will be, worthy of wonder.”