

Silence and Awe<sup>1</sup>  
Based on Psalm 46: 4-11 and Job 28:1-11  
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Cape May Presbyterian Church  
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We're going to be reading Job for a while, but not for the usual reasons. We're not reading Job for Job's struggles with his own suffering, and we're not reading it for the book's wrestling with the question, why do bad things happen to good people?

We're going to be reading portions of Job every Sunday for the next few weeks because when God answers Job, at length, God's answer is all about that vastness that we do not understand; it is full of what is awe-inspiring in creation. God asks Job, what do you know? Did you lay the foundations of the earth? Did you set the boundaries of the ocean?

God's answer essentially tells us, look at who I am, and stand in awe. Maybe that will help you deal with your suffering and your questions. As the psalmist says, come, behold the works of the Lord! And both in the psalm and in the book of Job, the appropriate response when we behold God's works is silence. Stillness—which maybe is more than silence. Not only not talking but also not doing, not busying ourselves.

“Who darkens counsel with words without knowledge,” God asks of Job. Too many words, not enough understanding. And to the psalmist: “Be still and know that I am God.”

The experience of awe, which is a confrontation with the holy, makes our words unnecessary and ineffective. Genesis tells us that even God, having created the world in six days, took a day just to sit back and appreciate it. That's what the sabbath is, a day in which we stop trying to transform the world and simply do our best to see that it is good. A day when we stop doing and simply be. Because the world as God created it is good right now, as it is.

The world God created is good, even though there are so many places where human sin has left a scar. Even though there are so many places where there is more bloodshed than there is food. Even though we do not know how to repair or

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was preached at a service of silence, which accounts for its brevity. After these brief thoughts, the congregation was invited into 15 minutes of silent contemplation.

how to heal what is broken. Even so, God stops us from time to time, tells us to stop talking, stop trying, and just to be. To stop and to feel what all the trying is for.

It's a little bit like the classic story of the workaholic dad, the one who loves the spouse and children so much that he puts all his effort into striving for the promotion and the raise that will keep his loved ones safe and secure. But in the long hours striving loses touch with the very loved ones he is trying to protect, the very reason he is working and trying so hard.

We stop to find and feel our awe, to contemplate the works of God, to remind ourselves of what we are created to be. What all people may be able to be, when there has been healing and transformation. We are called to stop and know that we are part of the very vastness of which we stand in awe. Be still and know that I am God. Be silent, behold the works of the Lord, and be in awe.