

Hold in silence for a moment, all that you have seen in this video.

A small blue dot in a ray of light...a small blue dot that sustains all of life as we know and experience it. Our conflicting ideologies. Our conceited ways of believing in our own rightness. All that is loving. All that is demonic.

A small blue dot in a ray of light. And all within the sight of the divine eye who sees all. What if that were true?

If what this video suggests is true, then what is the real work of all humankind? On this Remembrance Sunday when we recall with revulsion the kinds of things human beings do to one another in the name of freedom, when, like we did at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ask the hard question “can’t we do better?, we are compelled to go deeper, what is the real work. If not that, then, well what? Harder still, when?

Haggai’s prophesy lasted four months! In that short four month period Haggai offered five oracles during what was a time of restoration. Cyrus of Persia had overthrown the armies of the Assyrians and ended the 70-year occupation of the northern kingdom of Judah. When he first freed the ancient Israelites, Cyrus promised a return to the former glory, when right relationship with Yahweh would be restored and the temple rebuilt. Haggai wrote many years after this emancipation at a time when reality set in: none of Cyrus’ promises had come true.

Few Israelites had actually returned home. There was hostility and even violence against the returned exiles from surrounding people and even from some of the Israelites who had stayed in the land. The promised Persian funds for rebuilding the Temple had not come. There was no immediate prospect for a new king or kingdom, and the only king they had was Persian who appointed their governors. Jewish tradition, culture, identity and religious practice were about to be annihilated. Into this context Haggai sets his hopeful oracle...his impossible prediction...his beautiful vision from God for the future.

And what of Haggai’s prophesy speaks for us this day? If what we just saw is true; if we are but a small blue dot in a stream of light in a galaxy amongst galaxies and all but a twinkle in God’s eye, how do we hear Haggai’s oracle today?

“Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?”

And given what we just saw, our conflicting ideologies and our conceited self centeredness.... What is the real work on this Remembrance Sunday?

“Yet now take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, <sup>5</sup>according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; <sup>7</sup>and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor.

If we are but a small blue dot in a stream of light, what is it to have this house filled with splendour? How do you and I remember, accept and know we can do better, and do it? What is the treasure for all nations?

If it's not war, or religious and economic independence; if it's not safety and justice and education and prosperity; if it's not a ticket to heaven measured in the volume of our religious confessions, then what is it?

I wonder if the real work lies in two questions: Who am I, and who is my neighbor? Who am I that I should trivialize my life with wounded self-preservation, the holding on of old scores that keep me separate, not only from my neighbor, but mostly myself? Who am I that my perspective is the right perspective, that my opinion matters more than the one I reject? That I have a corner on the market of love and justice?

Rather who am I that who I am is not already perfect in God's sight and that where I need to be is right where I am? Who am I that I think I should love my neighbor more than I love myself? Who am I? Who am I in this moment – not in some story remembered or future imagined; who am I right now? Indeed, who am I as the beloved of God?

And who is my neighbor? Who is my neighbor as the beloved of God? Who is my neighbor with a history and a story and a perception that is nothing like mine, yet shows me a window into the Divine? Who is my neighbor who comes here from a foreign country seeking what I take for granted and rarely trust?

Who is my neighbor that I should dismiss his word or her experience and deny that the same God, with that same eye, who looks at me in love, affirmation and call, doesn't also do the same for my neighbor? Who is my neighbor for whom I feel such disdain, for whom I feel such anger? Who am I that I should look down upon those who share my planet: behind every pair of eyes is a soul at work? Who is my neighbor?

Who am I and who is my neighbor? The real work of remembering on this Remembrance Sunday is the real work of laying aside what no longer works, and opening our hearts to what we know to be true now. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup>The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts."

As we take our place in the cosmic order of the universe, we understand the real work to be about coming home to self and radical hospitality of other. The rest doesn't work. It never has, it never will. The earth is groaning like a mother about to give birth and God is looking upon the small blue dot in the stream of light, still promising. Amen.