

Reading: Genesis 1

Today we have two things to celebrate: Father's Day and Spring.

I heard of one father talking with his accountant, "In order to fill out your tax form," said the accountant, "I need to know how many dependants you have?" "Nine," said the dad. Not hearing him properly the accountant asked again, "Sorry can you repeat that?" "I'd rather not," he said.

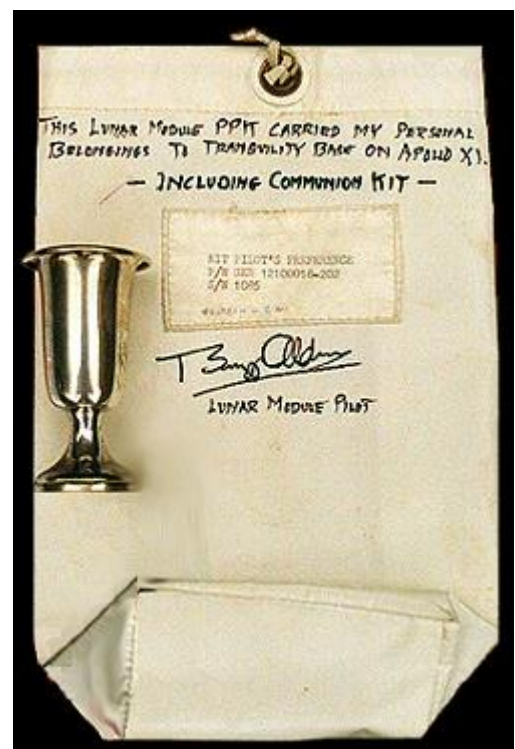
Earlier this year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of one of the greatest achievements of human history. Even if, like me, you aren't old enough to remember it you will have seen the footage. I refer of course to Apollo 11's lunar module 'Eagle' landing on the moon on July 20, 1969. What you may not know is that before they opened the door astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin had to pause; they had to wait. They were scheduled to open the door of their lunar lander and step onto the unknown surface of a completely different world. But for a moment in history mission control had ordered them to take a pause before the big event.

In that paused moment Buzz Aldrin did something that was not widely reported at the time. It was unexpected. It had never been done before. "I was very aware," Neil Armstrong recorded later, "that this was the culmination of the work of 300,000 or 400,000 people over a decade and that the nation's hopes and outward appearance largely rested on the results of what came next"

<http://www.spacerelics.com/inventory/apollo11.html>

Aldrin had prepared for this moment. He took out a communion set. He was after all a Presbyterian elder and before he and Armstrong headed into space and into history, he had received bread and the wine for communion.

Aldrin spoke across the comm system so that everyone in the ground crew back on earth could hear too. "I would like to request a few moments of silence," he said. "I would like to invite each person listening in, wherever and whomever they may be, to contemplate for a moment the events of the past few hours and to each give thanks in their own way."



Then he reached for the wine and bread he'd brought to space—the first food ever poured or eaten on the moon. “I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon the wine curled slowly and gracefully up the side of the cup,” he later wrote. Then Aldrin read the Bible and ate.

Today we pause like the two astronauts 50 years ago. We take a moment as Buzz Aldrin said to each give thanks in our own way. He was so right to do this because that's what exactly Eucharist means - to give thanks. But what exactly are we giving thanks for?

A few months before the crew of Apollo 8 had been the very first people to orbit the moon. What words could they use that would do justice to the occasion. In all the writings of the world, in all the books of humanity, there was only one reading that made sense.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1. This is our reading today too. Those early space pioneers had simply read the first chapter of the Bible, the act of Creation, as they first saw earth from space. And what did they see when they came around the dark side of the moon? What was it that greeted them? (Earthrise)

But the Genesis Bible passage makes a very clear point. In one small chapter it makes the same point not once, not twice, but five times. God makes night and day, God makes the waters, God makes the dry land and then God reflects on what's happened: verse 10 “And God saw that it was good.” God makes the plants and again in verse 12 God reflects, “And God saw that it was good.” God makes the seasons spring and winter; God makes the days and in verse 18 “God saw that it was good.” God makes the living creatures verse 25. By now you may have spotted a pattern “And God saw that it was good.”

Finally, God makes you and me, “Let us make them in our image and likeness.” God declares, “And then God saw,” and here is a change “God saw that indeed it was very good.”

Creation is good. The clouds and the teeming oceans are good. The stars, the sun, the air we breathe, the butterflies and the panda's in the zoo. It's all good.

That's the answer. We gather to give thanks today for Spring, for Creation - because it's good.

And we are all created in the image and likeness of God, uniquely ourselves.

We give thanks today because Creation is good, and God is good. And God has made us wonderfully and we are very good.

How difficult it is for us to say and how difficult that is for us to believe that we are good. We have been conditioned to believe that we are no good. We tell ourselves with the help of so much advertising all sorts of self-defeating message. “I’m no good”, “I’m ugly”, “I’m stupid”, “I’m whatever”. It’s as if we really believe that, when we were made by the Divine Potter, we were somehow rejected and then thrown into the seconds’ basket for cups with no handles and teapots that won’t pour, or that God was having a Friday on the production line when He made us.

On this Father’s Day we remember that sometimes we even set up parenting as a competition. You, like me, must have been to those dinner parties where people are playing competitive parenting. It starts innocently enough, someone says, “My son is doing well at kindergarten.” And then it begins, “Well my daughter is top of her class in maths,” and before you know it, someone has a son with the Nobel Peace Prize, a PhD from Yale, and has invented a cure for cancer.

Good parenting is never a competition. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. Parenting is much more an art form than a science. We simply offer love, we offer encouragement.

Like God, the Divine Potter, our task as parents is simply to bring out the child’s potential. It is God who ultimately brings out the best version of us.

Today I want to invite you, as you come to communion, to come as Buzz Aldrin did all those years ago. Pause; come and give thanks. Give thanks for the spring, for God’s gift of new life. Come and give thanks for the goodness of creation. Come and give thanks each in our own way that we have been made ‘very good’, in the image and likeness of God.

*Come. And let gratitude and goodness fill your whole being.*