

March 28, 2017

Dear Grace Church Family and Friends,

I've had a lot on my mind recently.

As some of you know from last week's reflection, our son Timothy broke his hand, and we had to deal with that. Plus, we needed a new car, after some problems with the old one. And, of course, Easter is coming, with all the busy planning that day brings.

There is a lot going on, at home, at work, and all of it has been weighing on me.

Then, the other day, I read a short article about B.J. Miller, a palliative care physician at the University of California at San Francisco and an advisor to the Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco. Miller thinks deeply about how to create a dignified and graceful end of life for his patients, and through this work, learned how we can improve our own lives, here and now.

In the article, Miller talked about stargazing as therapy. He said:

When you are struggling with just about anything, look up. Just ponder the night sky for a minute and realize that we're all on the same planet at the same time. As far as we can tell, we're the only planet with life like ours on it anywhere nearby. Then you start looking at the stars, and you realize that the light hitting your eyes is ancient, some of the stars that you're seeing, they no longer exist by the time that light gets to you. Just mulling the bare-naked facts of the cosmos is enough to thrill me, awe me, freak me out, and kind of put all my neurotic anxieties in their proper place.

That night, I went up to the roof of our building and spent a few minutes gazing at the sky, "looking up," just as Miller suggested, and before long, I realized I was not alone – for God was there, too. And, as I stood in the midst of Her creation, the vastness of it all seemed to put my problems in perspective. I began to feel better, less anxious, more at peace.

I guess stargazing is like therapy... or church... or praying... Whatever it is, I'll have to try it again.

See you in church,
Andrew