



Monday Musing: June 10th, 2024.
Hospitality...

Aliens and Us or *Aliens are Us!!?* I've been thinking about this over the last few weeks! And it has evolved from the idea, for some, the belief, that aliens were here, are here, or are still to come here.

And then, of course, some of you have met my friends, Alien Dave and Alien Ben. You'll see in this picture I put them to work to clean up the BBQ before dinner. I have welcomed them into my home – and put them to the task of sharing responsibilities. Would this be a sign of hospitality if aliens really did arrive? Is it how they would welcome me if we were the aliens arriving in their neighbourhood? I wonder how they might offer hospitality.

Seriously, I do wonder about the existence of other creatures, other life forms in our universe, after all, I grew up on *Star Trek*, and there were lots of other life forms every week. My favourite film is *Contact* on which they said, "If it is only us in the vastness of space ... what a waste of space!" And I have enjoyed reading books by Stephen Jay Gould, an American paleontologist and evolutionary biologist. He says we live on a Goldilocks planet that is just the right size, temperature, atmosphere, and distance from the sun for us, our life forms. Are there other Goldilocks planets out there? It is the mission of SETI and other science researchers to explore the universe for signs of other planets like ours and the possibility of other life out there. Gould's books are wonderful for these questions.

In the current issue of *Broadview*, the main topic is on 'Our Place in the Cosmos.' The article discusses the possibility of discovering alien life and that it no longer seems quite so far-fetched. The question for us, I believe, is this: What would it mean to us earthlings if there were to be an alien encounter? How would we respond? With fear, aggression, resistance? What does human welcoming hospitality look like?

Yet, I wonder, if other life exists, and I actually do believe so, then how will an encounter with aliens affect what our view of who we are, and who God is, and what creation is? If other life forms, aka aliens, exist, then how does one resolve the concept or theology of humanity being made in God's image for those who understand it as a physical image (which I don't) or how does one resolve the call to enter into God's relational image if aliens are also part of God's creation? Big questions, right? Where does Jesus fit in? What about the Holy Spirit? What about the other religious traditions on our planet? What religion, if any, would aliens have? Would all aliens have the same religion? What would they think of our religions and our inability to live with respect and caring together and for the earth too?

Early Christians lived in a small geographic area of the Middle East and over time, with a mission to spread the gospel and to explore, they encountered other people, races,

cultures and belief systems. Some adapted to Christian traditions; some absorbed it all; some were overruled; some resisted. What was known as being hospitable as a sign of God's kingdom was...debatable...shall we say. Or at least, it was determined through the lens of those encountering the Christians or the Christians' ways of being welcoming and hospitable to strangers even on their land because at that time it would be the Christian explorers who were the newly arrived aliens!

Even today, in some places there are struggles for accepting immigrants, refugees, those seeking asylum, and in some cases folk want to blame the new comers for our current economic woes. Whatever would we do if aliens arrived? What is it truly to be human and with that humane and with that humanitarian?

Maybe we should figure out how to live and love together on the earth first, before we go too far out there. Maybe we should figure out what hospitality means to us here, before we are visited from out there. Maybe a lot of things....

I'll ask Alien Dave and Alien Ben the next time they drop by.

Peace always,

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Prayer

Holy One of Welcome,
May the sacredness of home keep our hearts fixed on love.
May the holiness of hospitality keep us focused on the stranger.
May the call to love and to serve, to welcome, to feed, to clothe,
To bathe the feet of the wanderer be the faithful commitment we hold.
For all who encounter our beings, here, beyond here, with us, as us,
Or even into the absolute unknown, God, in meeting, in living,
in journeying, in being, may there be love. Amen.

Scripture this Week

I Samuel 15:34-16:13

David is anointed as king.

Psalms 20

Trust not in horses or chariots, but trust in God.

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Walk by faith, not by sight.

Mark 4:26-34

Parables of the growing seeds.

TR Question (Theological Reflection)

Where is God for you? Up there, a transcendent God? Here, an immanent God? Both, either/or, or at the same time? Describe what God's hospitality is to you.