

Our God is an Awesome God, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 12060827
1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43 and Ephesians 6:10-20
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 27 August, 2006

A few years ago, Sue and I left Denver and headed West into the Rockies. To be surrounded by those beautiful snow-capped mountains, is something awesome to behold. One can drive through Nebraska and half-way through Colorado, where most of the land is pretty flat. All of a sudden, one sees what might be clouds, but as you keep on driving, you begin to make out the snow-capped peaks. Sue said, "Those aren't clouds, they're mountains!" As we drove into them, as the car climbed up and up, we could see the difference between the mountains and the clouds. The mountains are covered with green forests, purple columbines, and yellow sunflowers. Clear streams of cold water rush down through the rocks. From our vantage point, we could see cities stretching out far below us.

Our friend Thelma from New York City, who accompanied us, asked rhetorically, "How can God make such beauty?"

We drove north into the Black Hills and from there into the Badlands. The Badlands are not really bad, they're colorful, almost as colorful as the Grand Canyon. There are hues of blue, red, and yellow in the rock and sand strata. Seeing these beautiful sights of natural wonder got Sue and me singing that song, "Our God, is an Awesome God."

Humans can do some awesome things too. We have constructed tunnels like the Chesapeake Bay-Bridge tunnel, bridges like the George Washington, and buildings like the Sears Tower. While in the Black Hills, we stopped at what is going to be the largest sculpture in the world. It is a monument to Native American chief Crazy Horse. It is bigger than Mt. Rushmore. It is a whole mountain being carved into a statue of Crazy Horse on his horse and pointing into the distance.

But, with all of our human ingenuity, psychology, microbiology, artistic talent, and engineering, we cannot contain God. We cannot contain God in a building or in our hearts. Yet, this awesome God created and loves you and me.

The Hebrew scriptures tell the story of Solomon moving the ark of God into the newly-built temple in Jerusalem. It was a big day, and you might be able to imagine the excitement if you were here Friday for Freshman move-in day. All of the residents of Jerusalem were out in the streets chanting and cheering and dancing. This ark contained the commandments. It represented the covenant with God: the covenant that God would watch over and protect this nation if the people remained faithful to God.

In the midst of all of that noise and excitement, King Solomon stopped and prayed, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!"¹ The king knew that God was much bigger than an ark or a temple, or earth with all of its grandeur, or even the universe made up of stars and planets and constellations.

This is a wonderful sanctuary, and here, we can touch God. But, this sanctuary cannot contain God. Our hearts can be moved by God and they can be filled with God's spirit, but our hearts cannot contain God.

We cannot domesticate God. We cannot tame God to fit our outlooks and prejudices. We can not claim God for ourselves, either as Christians, or Americans, or English-speakers. This

¹1 Kings 8:27

awesome God can't be contained.

God has created awesome wonders. But, do you know what the most awesome creation is? Awesome as the new Koury Business Center, Biltmore Estate, or the Cape Hatteras Light are, they're not the most awesome. Awesome as Mt. Mitchell, the Badlands, or Rockies are, they are not the most awesome.

The most awesome creation is a child. We cannot contain a child, just like we cannot contain an awesome God. This child will grow up and blossom the way God has intended. We cannot contain this child, but we can nurture him/her. We can help him/her see and feel the love of God. We can help bring this child into relationship with an awesome God.

You may be sitting there asking yourself, "How can I bring a child into relationship with an awesome God? I can't teach. I can't play an instrument."

I'll tell you a story. When our daughters were ten and twelve years old, every Sunday when they came into the church building, there was an old man standing at the door handing out bulletins. His name was Keith McGary. He didn't do much, but when he died, my daughters mourned his passing. He had connected with them. How? All he did was smile and hand out a bulletin, and make them feel as though they were wanted and that they were special. This old man in his very simple way, helped to nurture children into a relationship with a loving God.

What are you doing to bring this child into relationship with an awesome and loving God? You will teach this child something. You can't help it. He/she will know about God because of you.

You can teach this child about a vengeful God, a God who has no time for children, a God who gets impatient with humanity, or you can teach this child about a God of love who cares about every human being, no matter how young or old or how rich or poor.

You have been given gifts by God. You might sing, or draw pictures. You might keyboard or input computers. You might be a good organizer. You might be a good cook, or, you might be good at putting on bandages. No matter who you are or what your excuse is, God has given you gifts to use in praise of God.

How will you utilize those gifts to nurture the children of this church and of this community into relationships with an awesome and loving God? You may not consider yourself awesome, but you can make connections with an awesome God.