

**Sunday, May 23, 2021 – Pentecost Sunday, Staff Recognition, Baccalaureate**  
**“Where’s the ‘Wow!’?”**

Psalm 139: 1-16

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV

Structure: Frame and Refrain

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Familiarity breeds contempt, so the saying goes. I suppose it’s true – at the very least, familiarity breeds indifference. For every toddler enthralled by the new experience of repeatedly closing and opening doors, there is an adult bored by something that is truly incredible. Next year we will mark 50 years since we last successfully brought men to and back from the Moon. It would be the sixth manned trip, and last trip to this day, future missions scrubbed because of budget cuts and perhaps a sense from the public that we set what we accomplished to do, to beat the Soviets to the moon – we’ve been there and done that. Think of it, something as incredible as human beings propelling themselves from this world, where every single event in human history occurred and actually set foot on another world – even that lost its grip on our imagination. Where’s the Wow?

And that all makes me think – if we can lose wonder over even really big things, it’s a wonder that God doesn’t grow bored or indifferent toward us. Sinful creatures, and minor at that, farer below Him than an ant farm is below us. It would have been understandable if He’d just thrown up His hands in exasperation, gotten bored, or just started over. But listen to the verbs the psalmist uses to describe God’s activity toward us. You have searched me and know me. You discern my thoughts. You hem me in, you lay your hand upon me, Your hands shall lead me, Your right hand shall hold me. You formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I am fearfully and wonderfully made, intricately woven. Yes, you and I matter to God – He is familiar with us.

So familiar in fact, that He is the foremost expert on who each of us is. He even knows things we don’t know about ourselves – the words we haven’t said, the number of days ordained for us. He participated in creation. He enabled our conception and guided our development, including the loving service of our staff and faculty in bringing our graduates and others to where they are now. He heard

the prayers made in our behalf by parents and family. He worked through ancient history to bring about events that would lead to our Savior coming, and dying, and rising and then was sent by Jesus to care for everything He created with the greatest love possible – to point us to the only way to be saved.

Which brings us to Pentecost. Jews from all over the world have descended on Jerusalem for this great festival. It is ten days after Jesus' ascension – fifty since Easter. Suddenly Jesus' disciples are seen with fiery flames over their heads, a visible sign of the Holy Spirit, and He enables them to preach the good news of Jesus to everyone gathered there, each hearing the disciples in their own language.

But why? It all goes back to what David says about God in our psalm today. This foremost expert on human affairs knows that for all of our fearfully, wonderfully made awesomeness we don't stand a chance. He knows this because He knows everything about us, even better than we know ourselves – and while it can be a comfort to be known by God, it can also be terrifying, because what God finds grieves Him, He sees the apathy toward growing in our faith, He sees our boredom in working on relationships that were once exciting and have lost their luster, He sees our reluctance to give an answer for the hope that we have – that is, to share our faith in Jesus Christ. And that's just what He sees among Christians forgiven of their sin – He knows that not a single person is capable of believing in Jesus without Him calling us by the Gospel, making us holy through constant exposure to His Word and the ongoing effect of the Sacraments renewing, forgiving and strengthening us, and keeping us in the one true faith. Constantly. Tirelessly. He knows it because He's working at it, ALL. THE. TIME.

And so He gives the disciples the words to say, because, don't you realize, these are the same guys who get next to nothing right in the Gospel accounts?! And He has them preach to some of the very people who were part of the crowds wanting Jesus to die on the cross, because they were some of the very people He formed and knew, who were fearfully and wonderfully made, carefully, intricately, lovingly hemmed in and woven together so that they could grow up to kill Jesus – not believing until the Holy Spirit changed them at Pentecost. You'd think it was a joke if it wasn't true. You'd think He'd have

lost interest in saving this miserable lot long ago but the great Wow is that this exceptional, foolish, selfless love comes from God, even though He is familiar with us.

Isn't that remarkable?! I love it when God's love hits me like that and I really get it. Many new Christians get it all the time because it's such a radical message. So too, it's often easier for kids to be wowed. Our teachers see it, day by day in real time. Yet for many long time Christians, this message becomes old hat. And we'll think things like, "If only God stepped in with miraculous signs like He did at Pentecost - tongues of flame and such - then I'd be a little more excited about God.

What about us? Where's the "Wow!" Does God work among us lead us to exclaim how fearfully and wonderfully made we are? Can we not wait to speak to Him, who is so close to us at all times that wherever we go, there He is? I think of when a baptism occurs - I can guarantee you the vast majority of parents and family members stand in awe on those occasions, but if you've ever seen that font stationed here and thought, "Great, everyone is going to beat us to brunch this morning," you wouldn't be the first.

Don't confuse something being frequent with something being ordinary. You and I are recipients of such an abundance of Wow that it sometimes can feel like old hat. If you wanted to, you could receive communion once a week. That's pretty frequent and often I bet feels pretty ordinary. Yet imagine - God Himself comes directly to you, tangibly and gives you forgiveness of sins through the very body and blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for you on the cross. Two thousand years and thousands of miles away from the site? No problem - time and space have just melted away and you are one not only with Christ crucified but every believer who does walk and has ever walked the face of this earth. Whoa. Baptism? There are people in this sanctuary who were baptized nine decades ago. And you know what? Unlike everything else in life about us that slows down over time, the Holy Spirit is working just as hard today in their lives today as a baby who could be baptized any day around here. In fact, perhaps even more so, not because He cares less about that new baby because He has been working for years and

years in the lives of you and me and building us up to be ever more Christ-like. What about His Word? A pitched battle is happening right now, as our sinful nature wants to resist hearing that we've messed up and then feels convicted of our sin, and God mysteriously is probing us, like a battering ram knocking away doors of resistance in our heart to hear either the conviction that we need to hear for our sin and also the grace that we need to hear in our guilt.

Now if we could see it, if the Holy Spirit was burning in tongues of flame over our heads and leading us to speak different languages to each other or if He was wafting around like a plume of green smoke a la the Ten Commandments movie with Charlton Heston, it wouldn't feel old hat, not one bit. But that's just the thing – God IS working exactly that way right now, in a supernatural way that we cannot see but which His Word being read and preached each and every week proves. On top of that, angels are joining in our singing and the Lord Himself is in attendance. If we don't see the wow, we don't need to get the "Wow" back, the Wow is happening all around us constantly! Look! All you and I sometimes lack is the ability to appreciate it. I think sometimes we look too hard for what God is doing in our lives when He puts it right in front of our faces where we're not supposed to be able to miss it – because God is familiar with us and He knows what we need to see.

On this day, this Pentecost, that same God who is familiar with everything about us, who is impossible to elude, whose works are wonderful and happen so powerfully way back in the book of Acts 2,000 years ago – that God's Wows are at work just as powerfully right this second, right here in this room. See it?

There is a world out there ripe to be wowed by the Holy Spirit who will use simple people like you and me with proverbial tongues of flame coming through our words. We do believe that after all, don't we, that the Holy Spirit who animates our new life will work through us? Let's pray that He will use us for His purposes. What more Wow's does He have in store?! What I do know is that He will find just the right way to use each of us – for God is familiar with us. In Jesus' name, Amen.