

Meditation on Luke 2:1-18

First Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama

December 14, 2019

The Rev. Terry Hamilton-Poore

Last summer our whole family met up at the beach in South Carolina. Sam and I drove in separate cars to pick everyone up at the airport, and as we were driving back to the beachhouse, I was telling our grandson about the dolphins and alligators and other creatures we were likely to see in our time together.

Grady, who is seven, responded by telling about a hairy frog he'd learned about that breaks its own legs to make them into weapons. The other adults in the car and I humored him. "Really? What do you know. A hairy frog that breaks its own leg to make a weapon."

After we got to the house, I was kind of laughing about it with our son Ben—Grady's dad—who had been in the other car. Ben said, "You know, Mom—Grady knows a lot about animals. You might want to double-check it."

So I googled "hair frog that breaks its own leg," and up popped an article that began, "Harvard biologists have described a bizarre, hairy frog... [that] actively breaks its own bones to produce claws that puncture their way out of the frog's toe pads, probably when it is threatened."¹

Huh. I was amazed.

The passage from Luke that the children just enacted says that, when the shepherds returned with news of what they'd seen, "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them." I wonder if that meant they didn't believe them. The story of Christmas continues to be amazing. Amazing that God cares enough about this world to enter it as a child. Amazing that that child would be born in an obscure place, to an unwed mother in poverty. Amazing that news of this would be entrusted by angels not to prominent leaders, but to roughshod shepherds out in the countryside.

It's all amazing. So amazing that we adults tend to treat it like a sweet little story that we tell every year, but that seems no more real to us than Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. We hear the story, it makes us smile, then we go on with our lives.

Which is where the children come in. Children hear the story fresh. They hear it as truth, and that is how they share it with us.

¹ <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn13991-horror-frog-breaks-own-bones-to-produce-claws/>

We would do well not to pat them on the head and send them on their way. What children still know, and what we grown-ups forget, is that this whole world is amazing. If there can be a hairy frog that breaks its own leg to defend itself, there can be singing angels. There can be messenger shepherds. There can be a God who loves this world enough to walk among those on the most pain-filled rock-strewn pathways of this life and bring to them grace, peace and healing.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,” the angels said, “and on earth peace among those whom God favors.”

The ones whom God favors are those who are still open to good news. Those who, when they hear that news, will drop whatever they’re doing and run with haste to see what God has done.

And so, let’s do just that. Let’s open our ears to hear the story anew. Let’s open our eyes to see its wonder. And let’s open our hearts to feel, once more, the joy this story brings.

In other words, this Christmas, let’s be amazed once more.