

Thought for the day: 13 – 19 September 2021

by Harold Chaplin

A week of wonder with Harold

Monday 13th

What is wonder? I'd like to share some things that stimulate my senses to wonder.

For example, trees. Our garden is home to the tallest tree in Hertford. Then, across the road on Hartham Common, I can again raise my eyes to awe inspiring skyscapes. I'm a bit like G K Chesterton's little boy who, on seeing a glorious sunrise, says to God, "Do it again!".



Then there's wonder in the changing seasons on the Common: the blossoms of spring on the cherry tree over the river by the tennis courts, dreamily reflected in the river when you throw a pebble in; to pause, to stop and stare at the river beneath your feet as you stand on the bridge watching the weeds move with the current.

For me, these are all sources of wonder and I reflect on the words from Haydn's 'Creation', "The wonder of His works". Come to hear this uplifting music performed by Hertford Choral Society: <https://www.hertfordchoral.org.uk/our-concerts/autumn-concert>

Haydn: The Creation
Saturday 30 October, 7.30pm at All Saints' Church

Tuesday 14th

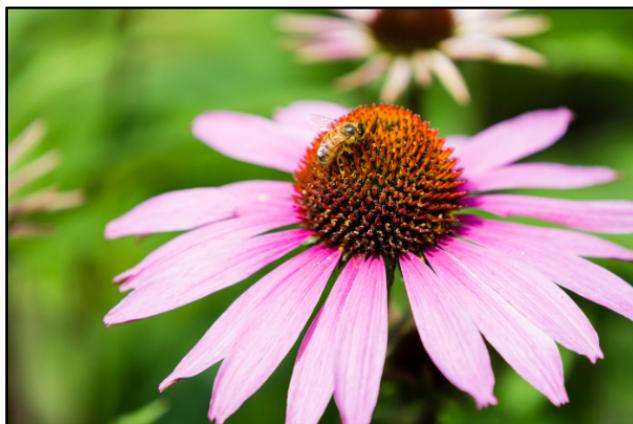
Wonder in creation: things large and small.

I have written about the wonder of nature as visible to more than one person, probably of adult age. Then I see my grandchildren looking at the smallest things. And wondering at them. Things the adult eye might easily pass over.

They have their own fascinating interpretation of things we might either not see or have no particular comments to make about.

*To see a World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.*

(From Auguries of Innocence, William Blake, 1757-1827)



Wednesday 15th

The wonder of music.

For me, wonder has its strongest meaning when it comes to sound; structured or improvised music.

Music is my personal true source of wonder; spine tingling is the effect of listening to some passages of music. Who could not fail to be melted by the melody of the clarinet in the slow movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto?



My playlist would soon become Thoughts for the Century. It would feature a lot of sung music, which can be a wondrous experience; but not nearly so wondrous as actually singing oneself! That is when the adrenaline and the dopamine begin to flow and I begin to be 'lost in wonder, love, and praise'.

Hence the lockdown experience has been so hard, especially on my Parkinson's. The act of singing alongside other people unlocks me for a while and I'm wonderfully free to move like a normal person.

I just cannot wait for the experience of choral singing again. It is such a privilege to sing in our choir at St Andrew's. What can be more uplifting than full-on worship with a choir? Saint Augustine said that a person who sings 'prays twice over'.

Mozart Clarinet Concerto. 2nd Movt Adagio.

https://youtu.be/YT_63UntRJE

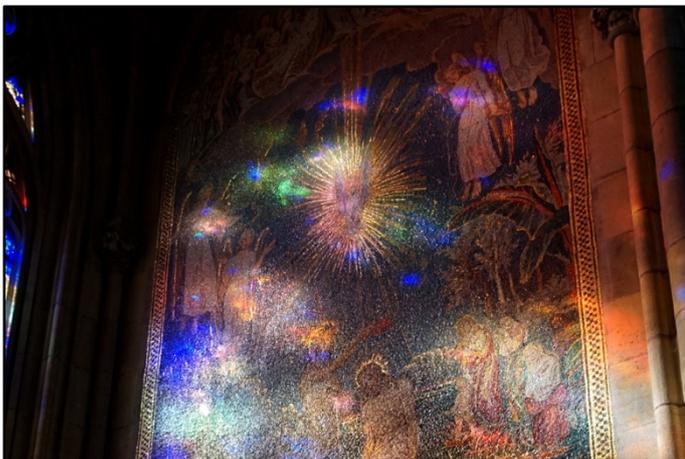
(Slow movement at 13 mins)

Thursday 16th

The wonder of worship.

Wonder tends to disrupt time, and I feel I'm sharing that pleasurable experience with other members of the congregation - effectively 'lost in wonder'.

In worship, total silence is a source of wonder for me. I have found meditation good for keeping my attention - touching my fingertips with my thumbs and silently reciting a mantra such as 'Maranatha' ('Come, Lord Jesus').



Some churches have times of worship when unstructured utterances, sometimes called singing in the spirit, are permitted and even encouraged. Our Liturgy for the Eucharist suggests a time for reflection between certain

prayers. It rarely seems long enough. As the old hymn goes, 'E'en (even) eternity's too short to extol Thee' (listen to the hymn King of Glory, King of Peace).

Come along to Soul Food when it is up and running again at St Andrew's, monthly on Sunday evenings. Space is allowed for wonder and praise.

King of Glory

<https://youtu.be/jEJb-LpHMsU>

Friday 17th

The wonder of recognition.

“Oh, it's you, is it, Mabel? Behind that horrible mask, I just did not recognise you!”

It is indeed a source of wonder how we recognise each other. I think, as members of the human family, we have come to depend so much upon facial recognition. Hence the creation of Facebook. Yet what times we have lived through recently, with the need to wear masks to inhibit the spread of the virus.



I cannot help thinking of that resurrection day when Mary Magdalene met Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Overcome with sorrow, she appealed to who she thought was the gardener, her sorrow blinding her so she could not recognise the man she was questioning.

He simply said, “Mary”. The tone and warmth of his reply caused instant recognition with Mary. Jesus' mask was off, to those he had allowed to see him again.

Saturday 18th

The wonder of rainbows.

Our creator God still loves us – a source of wonder to me.

Following the flood that only Noah and family survived, God set a rainbow in the sky as his promise, his covenant, that such a flood would never occur again. The rainbow itself is always a source of wonder (with stories of pots of gold at the end you can never find), and in The Wizard of Oz it's become the subject of a world-famous song, 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'.



I reflect that it is a reminder of God's love for us despite the terrible things we do to his creation. He still sends rainbows as signs of hope in a wondrous form.

Glasgow is a city more known for rain than sunshine, and perhaps at the time of the UN Climate Summit there may be a rainbow in the sky for world leaders to wonder at; to help them realise the urgent need to take drastic action before it is too late.

Sunday 19th

Our yearning for God – a source of wonder.

Have you ever read a book, seen a movie, heard a piece of music which stretches your mind?

All art that inspires is, for me, a form of signpost to things beyond. It creates a sense of yearning. In these post-pandemic times, we all yearn for something better; that the 'new' normal be better than the old normal.

Beethoven was nearly totally deaf when he wrote his ninth symphony. It is a thing of wonder that he was able to set the words of Schiller's Ode to Joy, not only to a memorable tune which became the European anthem but in its development, as the final choral movement reaches a massive conflagration of voices and orchestra, the basses (including me!) are taken almost beyond their highest register with the assertion, 'There must be beyond the stars a loving Father'.

Then the orchestra goes berserk 'till the manic last bars. After the first performance, Beethoven had to be asked to turn round from his conductor's podium to acknowledge the applause he could not hear.

This I interpret as yearning for God.

'Creation itself is on tiptoe with expectation, eagerly awaiting the moment when God's children will be revealed.' (Romans 8. 19, NTE)

Beethoven's 9th Symphony:

<https://youtu.be/rOjHhS5MtvA>

(You'll find the point I refer to in the last movement of Beethoven's choral symphony at 1.10.04)

