

*“Glorious Diversity”*

The Idaho Mountain Express wrote in its Our View on Friday, “Those **grainy black and white images** of a human being tentatively climbing down a ladder and jumping onto the actual surface of the moon captured the attention and emotions of the whole world. What had been only American became something else.

**‘One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.’** Armstrong’s words as he took his first step on the moon exemplified the sense that a human being was actually walking around on another world. The wonder and pride and joy belonged to everyone.

The nation that achieved this first step will not be left out of the history books. Yet, watch that moment from 50 years ago as it’s rebroadcast around the world this weekend. Watch the faces and reactions of people gathered across the globe.”

**“On the moon, everyone is a visitor, an alien, an Earthling. That shared identity is what the moon landing should celebrate.”** (“The moon landing belongs to all human beings” published as the Our View of the Idaho Mountain Express on July 19, 2019)

It was amazing what human beings were able to do in July of 1969! The Apollo 11 Astronauts went much further “up” than did the servants of a despot, who might have been seeking to reach “heaven” and become a god. Certainly, if God gets upset when we human beings try to be too ambitious, such as building the Tower of Babel, then the Creator did something to stop humanity from continuing to travel beyond this Sacred Earth. **Did God prevent the personnel at Mission Control from being able to communicate with one another or the astronauts?** The answer is clearly “No!”

Instead, that first Moon Landing was televised worldwide. It had a 95 rating in the United States – meaning 95 percent of the households watched along with almost anyone with accessibility to a television in the rest of the world! **It was a great accomplishment for the United States and it was claimed by everyone else on Earth to be a Triumph of Humanity.** So, what are we to think of the Reading about the Tower of Babel? Literalists still claim it is the literal truth about something God did. The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures were collectively referred to as “The Law” and were traditionally attributed to Moses, the Law Giver. However, a more complete understanding of the writing of Genesis and its purpose explain why the story of the Tower of Babel was included in the Book of Genesis.

**First, we need to remember the first five books – the Torah was not written down in the basic form we have them today until the Jews in the Babylonian Captivity were about to return to Jerusalem and Judea.** They were given their freedom by the Christ – God’s Messiah, Cyrus the Great, around 537 B.C. Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt around 1250 B.C. As one can easily see, what we have as the Torah was not written down in the basic form we have it for more than 500 years after Moses was already dead. **What the Jewish scholars used were the oral stories of four distinct traditions – the Yahweh, Elohim, Priestly, and Deuteronomic Traditions.** Some stories were special to one of the traditions and others were told by multiple traditions, although with variations – sometimes had very significant differences.

**The reason the Editors of the Torah undertook their task of putting down the first five books in writing was to educate and instruct the Jewish Babylonian Exiles who were going to Jerusalem and Judea.** Most of them had not been born when the Exile began and so they needed a primer on the Jewish Faith to help them avoid what led to the Jews’ unfaithfulness to God, which resulted in them being separated from God and utterly destroyed by their enemies. **It is no surprise we are told the location of the Tower of Babel is Babylon – the very place the former exiles are escaping to return to their family’s homeland.**

The Book of Genesis provided those former exiles with their faith heritage’s beliefs about subjects all religions have struggled with. How was the Universe Created? Why is there death? How did murder first begin? **Why are there so many different languages and peoples?** The Editors of the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures picked two traditions’ answers to that last question. We know one of them as the Tower of Babel

Story. The other Tradition's answer to that last question is found in the previous chapter of Genesis. That other answer is the genealogies of the descendants of Noah's sons following the Great Flood. **They reported each tribe or country descending from Noah's sons had its own language.** This is prior to the Tower of Babel Story.

So, if the details of these answers to the big issues of reality are not necessarily historical or accurate, what value were they to the Jews who were returning to Jerusalem from Babylon and then for people from up to and beyond even ourselves? **The main value was those stories affirm the Creator God is the one and only Creator! Furthermore, our God wants us to be in a special Relationship with our Divine Parent, one another, with All People, and with All of Creation.** Keeping all of that in mind, what is really important from the Tower of Babel story is the affirmation found in **verse 9, "the Lord mixed up the language of all the people, and from there He scattered them all over the earth."** God, our Creator, has created a multitude of people with different languages and they are scattered all over the Good Creation – the Sacred Earth.

Our God was not worried about or jealous about human competition. Giving us many languages was not done to give our Divine Parent a leg up on us. **Since all God does is Good and we were created for "good" to continue God's Creative Good, the Glorious Diversity of the Sacred Earth's many languages is truly a Blessing – not a curse!**

It may have made life simpler, if everyone spoke the same language but the quick and easy is not always the most meaningful and lasting. The testimony of the Tower of Babel Story is the quick and easy enabled the corrupt leader to organize everyone to carry out a gigantic labor of folly – the Tower never reached heaven and would have never reached heaven!

As the message of the originator of this Worship Series has said, **"Creation Spirituality rejoices in and courageously honors the rich diversity within the Cosmos which is expressed in every individual and embodies multiple cultures, religions, and ancestral traditions."** "Creation is rife with theme and variation and yet fear has driven us to try to tame, label and homogenize it. What do we lose when we privilege dominant voices and limit perspectives?"

If you have studied a language different from your home or native language, I suspect you will have learned your native language has incorporated words from other languages, which enable a more precise or enhanced meaning. We need other languages to enrich our own languages and to make more complete our communication of the messages and meanings we want and need to convey to ourselves and others.

If we take that all one step further, our Glorious Diversity is of great benefit to all of us because the cultures and life experiences of people from the many nations and communities in this Sacred Earth enhance all of us as we incorporate them into our own relationships. Remember that Space Race and the 50th Anniversary of the Landing on the Moon? If we had not had the help and participation of German scientists, the Soviet Union – Russia, would have gotten to the Moon first and won the Space Race.

President Ronald Reagan said in the final speech of his presidency, **"One of the most important sources of America's greatness: we lead the world because, unique among nations, we draw our people – our strength – from every country and every corner of the world, and by doing so we continuously renew and enrich our nation"**. He continued, "thanks to each wave of new arrivals to this land of opportunity, we're a nation forever young, forever bursting with energy and new ideas, and always on the cutting edge, always leading the world to the next frontier ... if we ever closed the door to new Americans, our leadership in the world would soon be lost".

**Finally, on the subject of our Glorious Diversity, let's remember the United Church of Christ's historic emphasis on seeking Unity in Diversity along with or God Is Still Speaking focus of welcoming All People.** Our Divine Parent Created everyone – in all of our Glorious Diversity and said it was "Good!" **Let's celebrate our Glorious Diversity and seek to protect it and the most vulnerable in our God Given Diversity! Amen.**