

November 2014

I am struck, as always, by the brilliance of color this autumn - Moses' burning bush everywhere I turn. My joy over the reds and yellows is true as ever, but there is more depth to my joy this year because it mingles with the deep, deep grief of what is and what is to come. This last flaring forth of the year gives way to a dark, barren, and empty time. I look forward to this usually – a time of rest and shelter and cold that makes even my fingertips come alive. This year, though, I am sad. The world seems heavy these days with injustice, death, destruction. Everything seems unbalanced, out of whack. The Asian Longhorned Beetle is a case in point. This species unwittingly traveled here in wood packaging materials from Asia, and predatorless in these parts, has been decimating maple, birch, elm, and willow trees. Moses' burning bush, crashing down.

I am part of this world that seems to be falling apart around me, and I've been struggling to hold the world within me together. I'd been thinking of ISIS, Ebola, climate change, human trafficking and feeling their weight on my chest while I was preparing the garden for the winter one afternoon. With every wheelbarrow full of rich compost that was once egg shells and shredded paper, I found myself questioning. Why care for this land when it might very well be underwater one day? Why move forward when the future we are unfolding with our lives might not even include our own species? What is the role of hope in this world that seems so hopeless? My mood was getting grayer when all of a sudden a ruby-crowned kinglet flew quickly into the flower patch and landed on a New England aster that had gone to seed. Its tiny body and quick precise flight enchanted me as did its mellow yellow and gray coloring. It was there for a moment, and it flew away. This visit stopped me in my tracks with a truth much more real than the realities over which I was distressing. This moment is good. This moment is here, and this moment is all there is. I can find hope in that.

Suddenly, this world inside me that I'd been exhausting myself by trying to hold together came tumbling down. I can't control the Asian Longhorned Beetles and I can't reverse climate change. I need to grieve over the fallen maples, the rising sea level, the planet we are leaving our children. I need to grieve well so that I can continue to hope, so that I can pass a moment with a ruby-crowned kinglet and be fully present to life in that moment, so that after the barren and cold winter I can notice those first gutsy green shoots of spring that push up through the heavy brown leaves and rejoice that life and love are not pushovers. Life and love are bold like seedlings, bright like autumn, quick and light like little birds, and life and love will go on. That tiny kinglet was my burning bush proclaiming to me that God is. Why care for this land knowing that it could be underwater one day? Because it is here now. Why move forward when the future we are unfolding might not include humans? Because we are here now. Why hope in a world that seems hopeless? Because Moses' burning bush is everywhere we turn proclaiming that God is, and the God of life and love is no pushover.

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