

*Watching for the “Merely” Miraculous*

On a flight back from leading worship in Maine a few weeks ago we sat next to a man suffering from a bad case of the *merelies*. “Do you like living in Florida?” we asked. “Oh, I don’t much think about it anymore he said. It is *merely* a place that happens to be surrounded by water, sure the sun comes up, but then it goes down. It really is no different than anywhere else in the world.”

His comments led us to come up with a definition. Here it is... the *merelies*: a condition characterized by the inability to recognize and appreciate the wonder of existence.

Amazing, magnificent, and astonishing things are happening every second of our lives, all around us; and if we are not paying adequate attention, we may not even notice! We may constrict our minds and hearts to focus on surface matters, small distractions, and insignificant details. Then we will have unwittingly trained ourselves to reduce the vast and beautiful world, by our dismissal, to merely leaves on a tree, merely music, merely prayers, merely an ocean, merely friends, merely life.

Author Craig Barnes vividly remembers when he first ran head-on into someone whose serious case of the *merelies* influenced his own life. He recalls that he saw his first shooting star at age seven. He was at his grandparents’ farm outside Ames, Iowa, at the time. First, he ran to his grandmother and told her about the star. She told him to hurry and make a wish and the wish would come true. And he said with excitement, “Really?”

Next, he ran to his grandfather and told him about the shooting star. His grandfather said that the shooting star meant someone had just died and was shooting off to heaven. And young Craig responded in astonishment, “Really?”

Next, Craig ran to tell his fifteen year old brother about the shooting star and what Grandmother and Grandfather had said about it. His brother said, “Oh don’t be a dummy.” Then, having just completed an astronomy class in high school, his brother proceeded to explain to young Craig that shooting stars were merely related to passing meteors, cosmic dust, and trajectories of light. And Craig lowered his gaze and said sadly, “oh.”

The *merelies* had struck. It took Craig years to recognize that wonderment was not dumb. It took him ages to perceive that awe and accuracy need not be mutually exclusive.

In this life are you suffering from the *merelies*? We hope you’ll recover soon. We hope that in this wonderful life you’ll look beyond the ordinariness of existence to the wonder that underlies it all. Don’t let life be merely a drudgery. Let it be a miracle and a mystery for you!