



Reverend Elaine's "Reflections" - July 201

Summer has already disappeared in a flash of sunshine and heat. It hardly seems that those lazy hazy crazy days of summer have passed by. The readings for the summer months in Rupp's book "may I have this dance" had a focus of fun, slowing down, enjoying life. By letting go and allowing the playfulness in ourselves to come out. In other words, encountering the child within, in turn, we encounter a playful God.

In July we are invited into "the playground of God" an image that I think can be quite difficult for many of us - to view God as playful and childlike. Rupp asks "if we can imagine a God who sings a happy song over us, a God who dances and shouts with joy? Could our God be one who laughs and enjoys life?" (Rupp, May I have this dance page 94)

In many respects I believe that the image of God as a playful child may be one of the hardest to embrace, because it is so long since as adults we have embraced the inner child. The child who swings on a swing in early summer enjoying the "different" smell of summer air, the child who wanders to the beach and digs in the sand, making castles and moats, searching for seashells and watching birds fly overhead, with the wind blowing and the grass moving. A child running through the woods jumping from tree stump to hillock crying out "I'm the king of the castle...." A child picking bluebells and dandelions, making daisy chain necklaces, watching the clouds overhead as they move across the sky, changing their shape as they fly. A child popping tar bubbles in the hot afternoon sun, fishing for minnows in a small burn (Brook) with a net and bucket. Climbing trees and bicycling, singing and jumping in muddy puddles. Experiencing everything life has to offer, walking barefoot in the grass, being buried in the sand, mud pies and sandcastles. These are the things of children, things that unfortunately many of us have left behind, only allowing ourselves to relive them through grandchildren, sometime just by watching and not by participating. I haven't seen too many adults jumping into a nice muddy puddle and enjoying watching the water jump up all around and splash on clothes and even faces. Giggling with glee as the mud and water splashes and splashes. Neither have I seen too many adults playing games in the grass, making castle of sand for fairy princesses and swinging on a swing so high you can touch the sky with your tippy toes.... then there's climbing trees -- Oh no I am much too old!-- And sensible. As adults our lives have become filled with the stresses of making a living, keeping up appearances, being viewed as sensible dependable, and serious. In Rupp's words, "our inner child has been pushed aside for business and busyness" (Page 95). How many employers tell their employees to take a play day and have some fun! Most of us live in world where winning is important and where we are valued by the money we make and the house we live in.

We are not praised for simply being, for having fun, for enjoying life. In fact we may even be called wasters or losers - told to 'grow up". The spontaneity of discovering, experiencing and being have been

lost to us. Yet it is this very way of being that Rupp is encouraging us to experiment with, taste and try. She writes “rediscovering our inner child can have a great impact on our spiritual life” (Rupp 99). She says that it is in rediscovering our ability to wonder and be in awe, that will help us to become contemplative, because it is through the inner child that we can release our fears of failure and allow ourselves simply to enjoy doing and being in God’s presence even when we don’t have the right words or we make a mess and the puddle splashes all over our best clothes; as laughter escapes from our lips the hand that grips ours and skips along with us is the hand of God - the God who created this playground called creation and made it possible for mud pies and rainbows; bluebells and dandelion clocks; sandcastles and daisy chains; sunshine and crunchy leaves; icy snowflakes resting on pink cheeks; eyes filled with glow and wonder. Then perhaps we can truly understand that line of Psalm 46 she quotes from “have leisure and know that I am God”. As we enjoy life and all that it has to offer, being open to new experiences and adventures, allowing our hearts to jump for joy and letting our spirits simply to be grateful for the gift of life as each new day dawns.

Rupp invites that we allow ourselves to be less productive in the month of July, I wonder if this is a spiritual practice that we may want to enjoy more often than one month a year, perhaps one day a week or even one hour a day. Allowing ourselves the joy of seeing our world through the eyes of our own inner child and enjoying the playground that God has created for us. As I draw these musing to a close I remember a nursery rhyme from long ago.

Girls and boys, are come out to play,
The moon doth shine as bright as day;
Leave your supper, and leave your sleep,
And come with your playfellows into the street.
Come with a whoop, come with a call,
Come with a good will or not at all.
Up the ladder and down the wall,
A halfpenny roll will serve us all.
You find milk, and I'll find flour,
And we'll have a pudding in half an hour

And God will be waiting in street, field, moor and beach singing the song and dancing the music, delighting in the world and each one of us.

Girls and boys come out to play, see the world I have made.