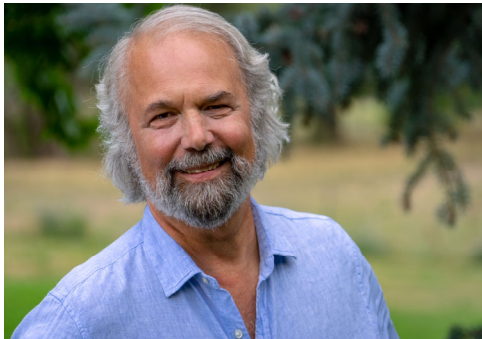


THIS IS THE HOUSE OF GOD

PULSE OF SPIRIT

AUGUST 14, 2024



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Here at Sunrise Ranch, we just returned home after being evacuated due to the Alexander Mountain Fire. The fire came so close to the Ranch that you could see the smoke and the flames. Nonetheless, this land was untouched by the fire.

We are grateful beyond words for the firefighters who protected this place. Without them, there could have been a very different outcome. *Thank you.*

This morning, I hiked Green Ridge behind the Ranch to the west. As I walked, I had a renewed appreciation for the beauty of this place—the rocks, sage, and pines; the coyotes, deer, bears, and so much more.

It had been raining for two days. Today, the sun came out and shone on the moist earth. Breathing in the morning air, I had this thought fill my mind: *This is the House of God.*

Morning hikes can be a time of meditation for me, and so it was this morning. Here is how it went.

Sunrise Ranch is the House of God.

This valley, Eden Valley, is the House of God.

The whole earth is the House of God.

The universe is the House of God.

My body is the House of God.

Do these sound like religious statements? To me, they are not. I don't believe these things. I don't believe in God. As I looked out across the valley I love, I just knew these things to be true.

The Creator lives here where I am. The whole earth is the House of Being.

Several weeks ago, before the fire, I hiked to Blue Lake in the Indian Peaks Wilderness area. It is about two miles high, and you can see the high peaks of the Continental Divide from there.

It is a six-mile hike to Blue Lake. You pass ponds, rivers, boulders, and pines. And wildflowers galore! Blue Lake itself is surreal. The water is a turquoise blue. Because it is above the tree line, it looks like a distant planet. Across the lake, a rivulet from the melting snow above cascades into the lake. I felt like I had entered a Salvador Dali painting.

About halfway there, two young women gestured to me to come to the edge of the trail and peek into the nearby clearing. Only thirty feet away, three moose were lying in the grass, one with huge antlers. They were resting after grazing in a nearby pond.

Right before Blue Lake, there are two waterfalls, one above the other. They ripple over rocks surrounded by wildflowers. There are low-lying shrubs around them.

At Sunrise Ranch, we have constructed new exit doors and a patio on the lower level of our Pavilion. In the process, the entire area in front of the building ended up looking like a construction site, which it was! The pond was overgrown and the pump for the fountain had ceased to operate.

We cleaned up the whole area including the pond. We got a new pump and planted grass and shrubs. It is still a work in progress, but it is looking beautiful.

In the process, I've given a lot of thought to the landscaping, and I suppose it was with that kind of eye that I looked at the two waterfalls below Blue Lake. The beauty was overwhelming. The artistry displayed in the placement of the rock, shrubs, and flowing water was genius. *Who did this?* I thought. It was so much more beautiful than what we had been working on at Sunrise Ranch, as lovely as that is. It is hard to imagine

that any human landscaping project could compare. As I gazed at the waterfalls, I was looking at what landscape architects hope to achieve, but never like this. There were no pumps involved. No artificial fertilizers or insecticides. It was alive with the spirit of the Creator.

This was far more brilliant than any plantings I've seen anywhere. Disneyland couldn't begin to match it. It showed the Creator at work. Everything about it said *God lives here. This is the House of God.*

I remember how, after spending a restless night dreaming a fantastic dream, the patriarch Jacob awoke saying, *Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not...this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. (Genesis 28:16,17)*

Are we to believe what he said? Or see and know it for ourselves?

There are brilliant scientists, psychologists, and educated people in all kinds of fields. And I appreciate smart people. I consider mental intelligence a virtue. Nonetheless, just being mentally smart doesn't give you real knowing. Knowing happens in a different way. Knowing is something of the heart, first of all—the heart that's open to love.

What happens when we love something? What happens when you love a person? Don't you join with the person you love? Doesn't that love attract you closer to them?

Our love brings us closer to whomever we love. And when we come close, and in some way join with that person, we know them. We can't claim to know all of them. There is so much to know of anyone. But the part of them we have drawn close to, we come to know.

I love the valley where I live. Over the years, I've grown closer and closer to it. I feel it and know it now more than ever.

Knowing is different than *observing and assessing*. You can stay separate from a person and observe and assess them. And there are times when that is important to do. But you can never really know someone that way. To know them, you have to love them and join with them.

This is relevant in a romantic relationship, of course. But not just there. Human relationships of all kinds bring the opportunity to get to know someone and to join with them in a way that is appropriate to the relationship.

Knowing someone or something is firstly a matter of the heart. That kind of knowing then brings along mental knowledge. That's how we know the most significant things that there are to know in a human life. That's how we know that the place where we live is the *Temple of the Living God*. When we perceive and know through the heart, then we have the opportunity to know things with our minds that are harmonious with what we know in the heart.

Is it not true that the mind gets into trouble when it tries to use a form of intelligence that is divorced from the knowing of the heart? When people try to do something on the planet that's not attuned and harmonized with the wisdom that's intrinsic to its nature? There are so many examples of that in our modern world, from Teflon and other humanly devised chemical compounds to nuclear armaments and so much more.

I don't think we're here to improve on those waterfalls I saw or the wildflowers, or to make better versions of them. The most we can aspire to be is an expression of that intelligence so that

we are harmonized with it as it expresses itself all around us.

Without referencing any belief about it, what do you experience yourself to be? Simply put, isn't it this? Aren't you consciousness planted smack dab in the middle of the world in which you live? From your perspective, your physical world extends out on all sides, and up and down. Mentally and emotionally, it is about the same. You and I are at the center of a mental and emotional world. Sure, your world looks different to someone else. And you look different to them than who you know yourself to be from experience. Taking everyone's viewpoint into account, why not just go with this—being consciousness at the center of your world.

It seems we are some kind of plant from Cosmic Being, placed where we are at the center of Creation. Apparently, the author of the Creation story in Genesis saw it this way.

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden...

Genesis 2:8, 9

You can believe or disbelieve the statement as might apply to some time long ago. But isn't that exactly the position you find yourself in right now? Are we not an incarnation of Being, bringing conscious awareness right into the middle of Creation? And there is life here. We know the tree of life here. Perhaps we are the tree of life the author described.

The rest of the story tells how that goes wrong for us as human beings. There is no apple involved. (You can read the story if you like. It's not there.) There is no sex referenced. The story simply says that human beings supplanted the pre-existing pattern of intelligence by applying their own intelligence which was divorced from it. And by doing so, they spoiled their experience of the House of God, named the Garden of Eden in the story.

What does it mean to fully realize our potential as consciousness planted in the world? It means that we realize that this is the House of God. There is a pre-existing intelligence that we know and enjoy. We have the opportunity to harmonize

with it and contribute to it. And so we know the tree of life.

We can know our own house as the House of God. We can know our own body and our world that way and begin to know ourselves as a co-creator—an individualized facet of *the* Creator embodied and in action in human form, right in the middle of the Creation.

What a joy!

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