

From the Pastor's Desk

## **“We” or “Me”?**

During my sabbatical in the summer of 2010, I read the book “Evolution’s Arrow”. It addressed the topic of evolution, and more importantly, where it is taking us. It challenged my assumptions.

I use to think that evolution was the survival of the fittest. In other words, the organism that was the strongest survived, and that which could not fight off the aggressor or adapt to its environment died.

If you attempt to pin down the ELCA, whether it teaches evolution or creationism, you will find it states evolution occurs within creation. This is one reason I’m an ELCA Lutheran.

My dog Joey just interrupted my concentration. He’s at the door wanting to go outside to do his business. Sometimes, I think he just wants a change of scenery. So, outside we go, he sniffing the ground and me with head back looking up at the stars.

What a view at 5200 feet above sea level. Stars shining beautifully, all pushing light toward me, which originated thousands of years ago. The light I am seeing is very old. It left the stars years ago and is only now reaching our planet. This can be hard for our minds to comprehend.

Maybe another way to think about this is to go outside and point up into the sky. Ok, go ahead and do it. ... To the people in China, you are really point down. Yes, down. This conversation would be unthinkable to the Biblical authors, so attempts to make the Bible into a scientific text book are ill advised.

Back to evolution. The author of “Evolution’s Arrow” states:

*Organisms that develop the capacity to mentally model their possible evolutionary futures face a common challenge: to find motivation and satisfaction in whatever actions and behaviors that are able to bring future evolutionary success. The challenge is not only to see what is needed for future evolutionary success, but also to be able to do it. Where necessary, they must cease to serve the beliefs, values and objectives established by their evolutionary past. They must develop the capacity to change the objectives established by their evolutionary past. They must develop the capacity to change their nature.* (p. 16-17)

“Change their nature!” Herein lies the problem—people changing their nature in order to progress successfully into the future. Most of us are not even willing to question our assumptions about life, much less change our nature. But this is exactly what needs to happen if are going to evolve and thrive as a species.

What in our human nature needs to change? We need to think more “we” and less “me”.

Everything we use and depend on is produced and brought to us by the coordinated actions of many other people. Almost everything made by humans is produced cooperatively. Even our mental lives are the result of many people contributing ideas. Human society is a network of cooperative activity that interlink our lives. Each of our bodies is an organization of about a million billion cells, each specialized into many different kinds of teams to form organs such as the heart, stomach and bones. Digestion, transportation of oxygen to cells, and countless other activities takes enormous cooperation. Indeed, in our bodies, the only cells that refuse to cooperate are cancerous and will ultimately destroy us if they are not stopped.

Today is Martin Luther King day. His statement seems more important now than ever:

*Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all learn to live together as sisters and brothers or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured.*" --Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

"We", rather than "me".

What do the US postal service, public utilities, public education, highway department, Medicare and Medicaid, all branches of the military, fire department, police services, social services, governmental services, public transportation, United Nations, social justice programs, environmental regulations, Social Security, ... have in common? They start from the premise of "we" rather than "me".

Some who prefer to put "me" before "we" call this Socialism and a sign of the degradation of our culture. They advocate the disbanding of organizations and programs that start from the premise of "we" and replace them with ones that focus on "me".

Back to the book "Evolution's Arrow" and how it changed my assumptions. It's not just the strong and mighty that dominate the evolutionary process. Research has shown that species that survive and have a robust future are those that *cooperate together* for the benefit of the whole. Individuals in species that survive find that it's in their best interest to cooperate for the survival of the whole. This evolutionary process even takes into account "free riders" and the need for all to be engaged in whatever way they can to benefit the whole. But, it all begins with the understanding that the starting and ending point is "we".

The Bible, Jesus and his parables and religion all call us to frame everything within the context of "we". We need a renewed appreciate of the "we". Indeed, the future of our survival depends upon it.