

Dear Students, Colleagues and Friends,

A senior at Kent State wrote to me last week and asked me, “How do I save the world?”

My first thought was, “Can you get a wrong number on LinkedIn?”

But, assuming it actually was me he was talking to, and people from further reaches do contact me from time to time, I did what I usually do. I sat down and gave the question some time to simmer. I picked it up, turned it over and looked at it from underneath like one does with a creek stone when looking for caddis fly larva. I looked at it from the side like a row of trees in a brush line. I pictured it nestled in among city neighborhoods, among an array of prairie flowers and perched in the middle of a mountain stream. It was a damn big question – one that deserved scrutiny.

And then, as is so often the case, one of you sent me the answer.

One of my favorite things in life (truly) is hearing from you all. Last week I received two gifts from you. One was an e-mail full of joy from a dear student who had wanted some help getting his daughter personally connected with the wonders of weather and its professions. The connection came about and it sounded like a cathartic experience. (Hurray, Thomas!) But it was later in the week when Melissa sent me the answer to our Kent State student’s question.

Writing from Austria, she told me she had run across a book, Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love by Elizabeth A. Johnson. For me, that was the hook right there – Darwin and God consulting animals. Oh yeah. I’ve always been amazed at my scientific colleagues who look at me askance because I am affiliated with a faith-based university. Likewise, I find spiritual colleagues who deny the most basic science, like evolution (There, I’ve said it!) because of their religious beliefs to also be incredible. (Please, note the context of amazing and incredible here is not said with laudatory gusto, but with slack-jawed disbelief.)

My best defense is always Einstein, a great guy to have on your team, who said, “Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.” Many people have offered scores of explanations for why he wrote this as he was more about faith and less about going to Temple. Despite

studying his work, I never met him so I just let the statement speak for itself – which brings me back to Melissa and Ms. Johnson’s book. She opens with the following from Job 12:

7 *“But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;*
8 *or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.*
9 *Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?*
10 *In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.*

Whether you call him/her/it God or the Great Spirit or Allah or a source of all energy, you must admit, there is a lot of wisdom in that writing. The industrial age brought us much ease through the application of human cleverness; but much of the ease was brought about by taking shortcuts with hidden costs or costs willingly overlooked in favor of greed.

Some say we now stand at a precipice. I tend to think of this time more as an entering a new landscape as if emerging from a daunting mountain pass in winter. Surely, we don’t want to backtrack into those dark peaks.

But what path will we choose in moving forward? If we want to “save the world” should we not look to the world; the birds, the fish, the earth itself and its systems from the most capacious to the quantum for our answers? It matters not in what professional field we work. Follow your passion so your work supports a fulfilled heart. But how to do it? You have the answer already. It’s not easy, certainly - but no one said life was going to be.

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