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Milestones and Resolutions

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Milestones and Resolutions

Abstract

"I celebrate with the Psalmist. I declare the majesty of the Lord's name in all the earth."

Posting about resolutions for the new year from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

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Milestones and Resolutions

Ruth Clark

January 4, 2022

“We choose to go to the moon and do the other things, in this decade not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills...” declared President JFK¹ in his speech at Rice University in 1962. While space missions and curiosity towards understanding our galaxy has persisted and been reignited in recent weeks with the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope in December 2021², some central concepts can encourage our upcoming year. What do we choose to do, not because it is easy, but because it is hard? How do we encourage growth within ourselves and our community? What milestones do we greet with curiosity and wonder? Here is where my reflections have led me in recent weeks.

A Milestone of Collaboration

I turned forty a couple weeks ago. It’s a strange milestone... one filled with ‘old jokes,’ black balloons, and “it’s downhill from here” sentiments. The physical reality of a finite body requires more maintenance, it seems. My husband can attest to this truth as he talks far more often about a sore back since turning forty this summer! I can remember my parents turning 40, a little... family friends dressed in black, some silly, and harmless, pranks... something to do with rocks, and a giant button that read “Over the Hill” that my mom affixed to her sweater.

Now, as a parent who recently turned forty, my kids’ memories will be a little bit different than mine. We vacationed in Florida last week. We chose “experience gifts” for Christmas this year and took them to the ‘most magical place on earth’ for two days and then drove over to Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex on Tuesday, which fell on my fortieth birthday. It was a unique location to spend a birthday (not that I’ve experienced a fortieth birthday in any other place), but for a birthday that is often hinged on the emotional reckoning of physical deterioration, I fared rather well as a result of my location.

Rather than feeling stymied by not having or doing whatever I thought I’d have or have done by the time I was forty, I felt any myopic visions challenged. I was immersed in a different milestone. As Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin land on the moon and declare the “leap for mankind”, I felt an exhilaration for courage and for places unexplored. Our first astronauts and our current astronauts literally place their lives into the hands of mathematicians and engineers. Fellow humans depend on the good work of other human beings then, in the past, and in the present – as we answer questions, respond to new obstacles, do our best work, and

connect and invest in people and ideas swirling around us. We need one another! Hundreds of people working together for a peaceful mission of exploration and invention (with the backdrop of 1960's-1970's conflicts of the Vietnam War and Civil Right) is reason to celebrate!

Additionally, what was deemed impossible or unfathomably a mere six decades ago became a reality to behold: humans walking on the moon. And the world watched... Newspapers around the world declared wonder and astonishment for humanity's achievement. People met this milestone with celebration and curiosity.

Investing in Human Flourishing

As I observed the *Space Shuttle* Atlantis and listened to stories of the work of the International Space Station from the tour guide, who highlighted that this mission is the *only* mission where so many (18) countries work as collaborative partners towards greater exploration and in *peace*, I reveled in the joys of humanity putting their best efforts towards greater discovery of God's cosmos rather than squabbling over land, resources, and power here on earth. What an exciting mission to participate in! And today, we are intricately connected to one another around a globe – what an opportunity and what a wonderful time to be alive! What good am I doing for others, not because it is easy, but even if and when it is hard? Who promotes human flourishing near or far and how can I be a part of it?

Embracing Wonder and Curiosity

But mostly, and most powerfully, rather than feeling the depth of age, I felt infinitesimally small amidst the vastness of the cosmos. "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place" the Psalmist writes. Oh what a vastness of heavens that humanity is beginning to explore. What happens when I take the time to truly consider the expanse of stars on a clear winter night is in holy awe of my Creator. Where light years measure distance and galaxies span dimensions that quickly make my head spin, I celebrate with the Psalmist. I declare the majesty of the Lord's name in all the earth.

The wonders of God's world come in so many forms – a delectable recipe, tulips emerging from the barren ground, a baby's giggles, a needed conversation, good books and stories, a bike ride, a smile. May I have eyes to see and consider the everyday beauty and wonder surrounding me. Forty years feels rather inconsequential in the *grand* cosmic scheme of things. A milestone that brings about needed reflection and resolutions for this upcoming year.

1. <https://er.jsc.nasa.gov/seh/ricetalk.htm>
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-59863092>