

A JOURNEY DOWN THE TRAIL

It was one of the first full days of spring in the high country of the Absaroka Mountains near where I live in Wyoming. The sky was a brilliant blue with a few puffy clouds. The air was balmy and there was the ever-pervading smell of newness. A good day for a hike into the wilderness.

Along with an old friend and my trusty dog Sundown, we went for a hike into the heart of the Clark's Fork River valley. There is nothing like exercising the legs and lungs to truly appreciate God's good earth.

When I hike the backcountry trails, I tend to poke at things and probe for mysteries. I turned over a rock in the middle of the trail and discovered a world within a world. The bottom side of the rock was covered with ants. They were doing what ants tend to do. They were running all over the place trying to make a living for themselves.

Watching them in action reminded me that this is the way our human world is greatly perceived. People are out everywhere busily doing things. Many spend their time caught up in their own little personal worlds. Some work very hard to earn the money they feel they need in order to survive. Others find themselves busily at work because they are not sure there is anything else to do. There is no shortage of busy people out there.

As I looked at my rock I couldn't help but notice how tiny it was in comparison to all the beautiful landscape around me. I wondered if these ants noticed...or cared...about the wonderful part of creation surrounding their rock? Do those people scurrying around know there is an awesome beauty outside their tiny enclosures? God has provided us so much and yet so few of our species take time to notice.

I gently placed the rock back in its hole so the ants could go back to their task at hand. Ants do what ants are created to do. As I continued on down the trail, I felt blessed that God had made possible for me this wonderful day. I was also grateful that fifty years ago the Wilderness Act was passed that allowed these kinds of trails to be protected.

There is nothing more refreshing than a day hiking in the wilderness to renew the soul. For me that's what spring is really all about. This is time to be immersed in nature and to once again discover that life is more than being busy doing whatever busy people do.

The Rev. Warren Murphy is an Episcopal clergyman who serves as Environmental Projects Coordinator for the Wyoming Association of Churches.

