

Living with Mystery  
1 Corinthians 15:1-26, 51-57

Rev. Kenneth M. Locke, Interim Pastor  
St Paul United Church of Christ; New Bremen, OH  
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Back in the 1990s, and into the early 2000s, there was a popular TV show called The X-Files. It was about two FBI agents who investigated paranormal, extra-terrestrial, unexplainable phenomena; lots of spaceships, little green men, vast intergalactic conspiracy theories.

The two FBI agents were Fox Mulder and Dana Sculley. Fox Mulder was a true believer. He believed in mystery beyond human understanding. Dana Sculley was a scientist. She believed in hard facts. Anything that seemed miraculous was just something we didn't yet have the science to understand.

The X-Files has been off the air for close to twenty years, though you can still find it in reruns. But it's safe to say that today, we are living in a Dana Sculley world. We are living in a time of science. Science permeates our lives. Science rules our lives.

We know how to create and harness electricity. We understand tornadoes and hurricanes. We know beautiful music is just soundwaves acting on the inner ear. We understand the chemical reactions happening in our brains when we fall in love. It's all science. No mystery. Just science.

We like the Fox Mulders of the world. We even feel sympathy for them, those people who believe in mystery. But let's face it, we live in a Dana Sculley world. Science rules.

Which makes Christianity a hard sell, especially the resurrection. "Wait a minute. You want me to believe a man was killed in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. He was dead for three days. And then, God raised him from the dead? And because of that, we know we will someday be raised from the dead, too? You want me to believe that?"

The thing about the resurrection is, we can't prove it. No one can. It is beyond science. The resurrection is not about fact. It's about faith.

For we Christians, the resurrection is important. Paul is very clear about this. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we know we will someday be raised from the dead, also. Not just in a spiritual form. Not just resurrection of

the soul. But physical, bodily resurrection. God loves us just as much as God loves Jesus. Since God raised Jesus from the dead, God will raise us from the dead, also. But of course, we can't prove it.

All we can say for certain is something happened. All we can say for certain is after Jesus died, something happened to his followers. Something happened to make them put their lives on the line and start spreading the good news of God's love in the resurrection of Jesus. Something happened that made them believe it and start going out and sharing the good news.

But that's all we know. Something happened. They believed something happened, and they talked about it. But we can't prove it. And we never will. It's beyond our science. It's mystery.

And that, I believe, is why our faith is so powerful and so important for our time.

We need mystery. We all need mystery in our lives. Without mystery we are not whole. But mystery is hard to find.

Our lives are so scheduled with things to do and places to go, clients to meet and papers to write, concerts to rehearse and attend, there's no time left for mystery. And when we make time for it, when we watch the sunset or hike in the woods or listen to beautiful music, when we try to reach out and touch mystery, we know it's just science. We can explain it. And mystery we can explain is not mystery. But we need mystery.

The X-Files was fiction. The show worked because it tapped into a basic truth. To be fully human, to be the people God made us to be, we need mystery. We live in the time of Dana Sculley, but Fox Mulder is in all of us. And if we don't recognize him in us, we are not fully human. In fact, we are a lot less.

This is why Christianity is so important for us today. We Christians believe in mystery. We can explain what happens in baptism, but the grace of God we invoke is a mystery. We can put communion elements under a microscope, but how we are caught up into heaven to commune with the saints is a mystery. And we need mystery. We need mystery.

If you will allow me one more reference to The X-Files. Dana Sculley was a scientist. Very objective and clinical. Most of her reports included the line "I can neither confirm nor deny agent Mulder's conclusions." But if you paid attention, you saw she always wore a cross. The hard-nosed, skeptical, non-believing scientist always wore a cross. We all need mystery.

Was Jesus raised from the dead? Will we be raised from the dead? Paul thought so. The earliest believers thought so.

But you and me? Do we know if Jesus was raised from the dead? Let me put it this way. If we will open ourselves to mystery; if we will open ourselves to a God who loves us and is perfectly capable of acting outside of our science; if we will go against the tide of our times and open ourselves to God's mystery, then we'll know.

Thanks be to God for the gift of mystery, which makes us whole. Amen.