SEARCHING FOR EARTH

Good planets are hard to find these days. Actually, other good planets don't really exist in the known universe when it comes to our species — homo sapiens. We have been reading and watching how hard it has been to actually find any planet that could satisfy this keenness man has had to discover and populate elsewhere. Literally billions of dollars to send unmanned shuttles to the end of our tiny solar system, taking years to view what we already know. It isn't out there. And if it isn't in our little solar system of 9 planets, imagining it elsewhere is hard to fathom.

We measure how distant they are in units of Light Years — literally how long it takes light to travel in a year, one light year being about 6 trillion miles. When we remark on some distant planet, we do so in well know earth terms, such as "it may have water." May? Or lets study Mars because it "might" have had water. At 34 million miles away, Mars seems like a weekend retreat, as though we could skip out of work early on Friday and arrange a late meeting Monday morning out of the office so no-one will notice we went there. The reality is, if we could travel using today's technology, it could take a good part of an average lifetime to arrive. In the end, what do we accomplish, arriving at a planet where all the water is in a frozen state? And what about trying to land there and pretend that we can survive when even Bill Nye knows that there isn't any oxygen?

And the other galaxies that we study — hundreds or thousands of light years away, many burnt out such that we only see the light that reflected them now since they burnt out many millions of years ago. When does it make sense to explore only when the likelihood of reaching the destination is even remotely probable? Such exploration is nothing more than science fiction. If we can't get to it, why think about it. Venus, the closest to us, is a balmy 850 degrees Fahrenheit and everything would burn. Mars, in the other direction, is about -84 degrees Fahrenheit meaning nothing would grow even if oxygen was present there!

Our efforts, including those which have been spurred onwards by the comments of the late Dr. Stephen Hawking, border drivel in terms of reality of success. Why spend the time in theory? Why explore? To recount Dr. Hawking's reasoning, one is required to accept the premise that we are doomed on the planet that was given to us. That, inevitability dictates the crisis to travel and discover. The notion of tangible opportunities, of practical solutions for solving what we know as an anthropogenic problem, only exist in some minds and in the books of the late Arthur C. Clarke. As much as our problems are upon us, our solutions are beyond us. The sad dilemma is that we have created a problem which will, ultimately, destroy us at a much faster rate than our capacity to address it, let alone solve it.

So now, let us attempt to board the dream ship of Clarke, or Bradbury, or Verne. Venture out and view the possibilities for some planet, any planet that could accommodate the 7.7 billion of us. It must have water, oxygen, a climate of reasonable temperature and minimal fluctuations. Obviously, it must have life as photosynthesis or a similar process whereby there is a balancing to sustain evolution. It should be large enough, and stable enough that it won't be engulfed by a nearby black hole or instantly washed away by a devolving nebula. Where do we look is the question? Our dream ship ignores the frozen planets as quickly as it does those too close to the energetic sun that they burn all matter. Our views cannot and should not be directed to unreachable destinations. In short, we must be realistic, and genuine in the concept of a solution for all and not just the richest of billionaires who, for the sake of sensation, take credit for catapulting cars into space.

Finally, and once we accept the limitations of our possibilities, we find the candidate, the solution, the answer. It's perfect in its atmosphere, life supportability and prospects for future. In terms of our assessments it has beauty beyond description and opportunities of definite survival. We have found earth, we just did not realize that it is and always will be our best and only choice. As we come back to our senses, discarding the silly idea of ever finding a "second earth", let alone knowing how to reach it or even finding the resources to do so, the simple and humble realization is that making the planet work is our only option. It is not replaceable, but it is destructible.

It was we who created the problem and we, therefore, must seize carriage of it and exact answers for change. The solutions will not evolve from the mindset which bore the problem in the first place. We must embrace change and find the determination to seek resolve. To ignore this challenge, assures passage back onto the lost dream ship of fools.