

For the Beauty of the Earth  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - Year C - 05/12/2019  
Psalm Reading: 148  
1<sup>st</sup> Reading: John 13:31-35, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rev. 22:1-5

This Sunday I had intended on preaching from Revelation Chapter 21 on the new heaven and the new earth, but as I worked on the sermon I found myself drawn more and more to the 148<sup>th</sup> Psalm. I felt God and all of nature speaking to me to Praise God from the Heavens, from the earth, and from the depths of the sea. You see...

Spring is here! And Summer is not so far away. It is such a joy to see the green grass, the budding trees, the stir of life. Winter is at an end and we can take a walk and go for a hike and not feel the sting of the bitter cold, but actually be warmed by the glow of the sun.

It is a time for working out of doors, walking out of doors, playing out of doors. How fortunate we are to be greeted by God's creation every time we walk outside. And though spring comes relatively late north of the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel, it does come. And after all the waiting, it is perhaps even more appreciated more welcome.

In the course of writing this sermon I got a bit of what we call "spring fever". I had thrown open the window to my office and could feel the cool breeze and hear the call of the wild. I wanted to cast off my responsibilities and just go for a walk-about. But instead I remained inside and considered the stirring that was welling in every corner of my soul.

This stirring was in part prompted by our responsorial psalm this week. The 148<sup>th</sup> Psalm invites us to “Praise the Lord!”

“Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights above.” Everything seems small from that perspective. Much can be seen.

The angels, the heavenly hosts themselves are called upon to praise the God of Hosts, the one who, in the Old Testament is often called the God of Armies.

Sun, Moon and Stars are called on to praise God. These are not animate – God’s Handiwork is manifest in the very existence of these bodies, there for us to see.

You know, God gave us the Ten Commandments to regulate our lives. But God gave the universe the laws of physics. And the beauty of the universe is made plain in the motion of those celestial spheres.

“Let them praise the name of the Lord, because at his command they were created and he established them for ever and ever – He issued a decree that will never pass away.” What is that decree? God’s guarantee of unending, eternal love.

We move from sky to sea...

The sea creatures are called on to praise God. But what did the ancients know of sea creatures. All they knew is what they pulled up in their nets or what might randomly break the surface. A flying fish or monstrous whale blowing a stream of water into the air. Can you imagine the wonder of such a sight to the ancients? We are inured to it because we see it all of the time on television and in magazines.

But we know that God Has been there and touched that place, making all the amazing creatures that inhabit that underwater world.

Lightning, hail, snow, clouds and stormy winds all obey God's orders, these actors in nature. When they become powerful and wreak havoc, we still call them acts of God. They reveal the power of God. The earth is a tribute to God the creator. God loves the world because God created it, just as we love our own creations.

The Lord created the:

Mountains

The Hills

The Plants -

The Animals – Birds, cattle, the sheep and the squirrels. All these places, all these animals praise God through their very existence.

So we rulers of the earth. We kings of the Earth should be praising God for what God has given to us. Yes, all of us...the young people, the old people, the children. Yes, let us all praise the name of the Lord. And we praise God from everywhere, from the sky, from the sea, and the land.

And why do we praise? We are close to God's heart, and we have been raised up to be stewards of all this space. It was all created for us.

God is the creator...God is the power behind all of it. It is all out there to be seen if we are only willing to look. I think we have to be open to seeing God's handiwork, because it helps us to understand our part in God's creation and our relationship with God. I think the key is that we have to pay

attention...Think about that phrase for a second, “pay attention”. When we pay for something we give something from or of ourselves for something. What we pay in this case is our attention. It takes effort. It takes an act of will to give our attention to something and I think praising God helps us to do that. You know, seeing God’s creation is all a mindset.

### Mount Rainier Story

Self-centered, self-focused.

Two weeks ago we went to the UP...

Being a dedicated Christian helps to see things differently...experiencing in the moment

Porcupine Mountains...Lake of the Clouds.

Marvelous display of God’s creation.

I pray for that kind of experience for all of you, getting in touch with the life that surrounds us. Living life in the moment, not thinking about our troubles from the past and all the things we need to do in the future.

Life should be a positive relationship with God. Going out into nature helps us to connect with God. It helps us to stay in relationship with God. Honestly, I think we are constantly / always in relationship with God. There are just times when we are estranged from the creator, and those are times we distance ourselves from God’s love. It is because we are focused on ourselves, not focused on others, not focused on God’s creation, not focused on God.

The fact is, God’s love is always there to be accessed, no matter where we are. It is simply up to us to let down our guard

and allow it to happen. I think nature is one of the places where it is most easy for us to make this happen, because we are so surrounded by God's majesty and power and caring hand. It becomes obvious.

Nature...It is the sun, moon, and stars revealing God's majesty in the sky. It is the mysterious sea creatures revealing the creative work of our God. It is the Lord's presence in the trees, the lakes, and the streams that cover this beautiful land.

So, my friends, open yourselves to God's presence. Go out into God's creation. See the world through fresh eyes, and in that space absorb the wonder of what it is that lies the your sight and in your heart.

Then you may you praise God with heart and soul and voices.

Please bow your heads and pray with me...

God of glory, you are above the heavens. You labor beneath the ocean waves. Your work pervades the landscape. You made us and all that surrounds us. Holy and Triune God, open our hearts and minds so that we might see your glory, and proclaim your name to all the people of the world.

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