

Jan. 15, 2017

Lesson 8: Psalm 104: 1-4; 24-30

Praise God the Creator

Context:

Psalm 104 is a psalm of praise. The psalmist begins by stating that they believe that their whole life is to praise the Lord. The psalmist then goes on to describe how the Lord is clothed in glory and makes creation a canvas reflecting that glory. Like an artist, the Lord creates things with great detail and makes everything function as it should. The clouds, the wind, the foundations of the earth, the water, and the mountains are all God's handiwork and reveal that God is the greatest artist of them. For most of the psalm, the psalmist goes into great detail describing the wonders that we see and find in nature. But even these things that are created only last so long. When things die, they return back to the dust. Even out of the dust though, God brings new life and creates new things with God's breath.

Application:

The psalm for today reminds us that we believe that the Lord is the creator of all things. God made everything and everyone, making this world a marvelous place to look upon. God is even at work in the life cycle process, giving life and resurrecting things. One of my favorite hymns to sing when I was growing up was "Hymn of Promise," number 707 in the *United Methodist Hymnal*. The opening words describe the beauty that we find in nature:

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.¹

The vivid imagery present in the hymn reminds us that God created the world for us to marvel and take delight in all that is there. As with the course of psalms, we read that when we look out our windows and watch the things taking place, God's fingerprints are all over them. From the mists that rise in the morning to the picturesque sunsets, we see that God has made these things and we get to be the recipients of their beauty. One thing I always try to do is experience time outdoors where all I do is just look at nature and try to find new things I've never seen before. Sometimes just sitting and appreciating the outdoors can be a way we pray to God and give thanks.

But even in nature, we can see that even things in creation have their time and then they are gone. Flowers die in the winter, trees lose their leaves in the fall, and the snow melts away when spring begins to come. Even in humanity, we see that people we love who die and end their journey. And the same will happen for us at some point in our life. But even in those moments we are reminded that our Lord continues to give life:

¹ Natalie Sleeth, "Hymn of Promise," in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989): 707.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity; In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity, In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see. ²

Even when something in creation “dies,” we see that God is at work to make something new. Just as Adam died in Genesis and went back to the dust, his body was used to fertilize new soil that gave life to other things. The same goes for when we die. Whatever we live behind can be used to help give life for others. It may be through the words we gave to someone, the physical items we leave behind, or the legacy that we leave in our death.

All in all, this Psalm is to remind us that God is the great Creator who is at work constantly. And as humans, we are called to delight in that creation and see ourselves as part of it. But we are also given a challenge. We are charged to live lives that honor our Creator and are to remember that our words, actions, and behaviors of today affect those who follow us. May we strive to be the best that we can be so that others may know that our God has created a wonderful world.

² Ibid.