

Jan. 29, 2017

Lesson 9: Psalm 148

All Creation Praises God

Context:

Today's psalm is one that focuses on all of creation praising the Lord as the source of all things. The verses almost follow the order of creation as the psalmist cries out for everything to praise the Lord: the heavens, the messengers, the heavenly forces, the sun and moon and stars, the sky, the earth, the sea and its monsters, the elements of fire, hail, snow, smoke and wind, the mountains, the trees, the animals, the kings and princesses, the young and the old. Does that cover everyone? The psalmist has made the ultimate list and everyone has received an invitation to give praise to the one who gave them life. The psalmist cries out for all of them to praise God because it is because of God that they exist. We even see it in the special covenant that God has with the Israelites. Because of God, they have strength and power to be God's people.

Application:

In the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City, there is a famous painting called *The Creation of Adam* by the famous Renaissance sculptor and painter Michelangelo. In the painting, we see God the Creator reaching out to touch Adam. Their two hands are reaching towards each other as if God is sending something to Adam. The rest of the Sistine Chapel depicts different scenes of the stories in Genesis. All of them reveal that God is in relationship with earth, the heavens, humans, and the forefathers and foremothers of the faith. For over five hundred years, countless people have walked through the halls and seen this beautiful painting that shows God as the ultimate artist.

I remember one day in college getting in the dormitory elevator and holding the door for a visiting mother. In her hands was a large painting of a close up shot of the hands coming together to touch. It was so large that it would take up most of the bulletin board in the dorm room. What student would use this painting to put on their wall when it could be full of pictures, school assignments, sports teams, bands, or even a fraternity banner? As a religion major I was always curious to see what symbols or expressions of faith people would choose to display and why they chose those particular items. Even though my curiosity was piqued, I continued to go to my dorm room and go about my business.

Imagine my pleasant surprise when I go to visit one of my peers I had met the year before and discovered that the painting belonged to him. In a lot of ways, I didn't really know him that well. His own calling was to work in the medical field or to do something that dealt with nature. My calling was to serve the local church. He spent a lot of time in the science building and I in the humanity building. But over the course of college we became good friends even though we had different callings and even belonged to different bodies of faith. Our conversations would always include how we saw God at work in the environment and the beauty that is in creation. In our adult years, I was asked to officiate over his wedding. All because of a painting that showed God the Creator at work that led to a friendship.

To me this Psalm sums up the joy we are to have in God who has created all

things. Because of God, we are able to enjoy the places that we live, the food that we eat, the animals we both hunt and keep as pets, the places we go to vacation, and most importantly the people that we meet in life. Life is about interconnectedness. We are connected to God, to the land, and to one another. All of us are unique with special gifts and talents and features that distinguish us from one another. But all of us have an imprint of God upon us.

The most beautiful part is that when we realize and see that uniqueness in one another, we realize that God is a master conductor who sees the individual attributes and wants them to come together. Like a symphony, when we come together and play our own instruments, we can create a beautiful sound that praises God. As you go about your week think about those places where you see God's handiwork and how you are a marvelous piece of this masterpiece as well. See how you or your neighbor are similar, yet different and rejoice that God created that person too. Look outside and see how the birds fly in v formation and take turns leading the pack. See the flower that slowly rises from the ground and watch it bloom. And in the midst of all things, give praise to our God who is the source of all life.