

2024 09 15 – *Creation's Voice*

Scripture: Psalm 19 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

May the words of my mouth
and the thoughts of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, YHWH,
my rock and my redeemer!

This last verse in today's reading is one that many of you are probably familiar with. When I was growing up I had a minister who spoke those words, or at least a similar translation of those words, before every sermon. It has never been part of my tradition, but they are beautiful and very appropriate for this moment in the service.

The reality of the way we worship, the liturgy that we use, is that you get to hear my voice a lot. And you also hear the words and therefore the voices of the men who wrote the books that make up our Bible. Today we are reading from the Book of Psalms. Today's psalm like many of the songs in this book is attributed to King David. We don't know for sure whether this really is his writing, his voice, but it certainly is the voice of an Israelite who lived over 2000 and maybe even 3000 years ago.

The author is obviously someone who loves both God and creation. He writes,

The heavens herald your glory, O God,
and skies display your handiwork.
Day after day they tell their story,
and night after night they reveal
the depth of their understanding.

If the skies have something to tell us about God, then those of us who live here in Saskatchewan definitely have an advantage, don't we? We are privileged to experience the endless, living skies of the prairies. In the psalm, the author writes about the sun saying, "It rises at one end of the sky and travels to the other end, and nothing escapes its warmth." One of the things that I love about the prairie is the number of sunny days that we experience, even in winter. For me, the sun in the sky is a reminder of the warmth of God's love, that fact the Holy Mystery is with me always, that when I wake up in the morning God, like the sun, will be there to greet me.

I found an article by a young religious woman called Maggie Garnett, whose particular delight lies in the glories of the setting sun. This is an excerpt from her writing:

The brilliance of these summer skies has been breathtaking, and they are ones I will carry with me for months and years to come. There has been something of an almost extravagant quality to them. Is the Lord just showing off? Yet I know that these will be sources of consolation when the horizons of my interior or exterior realities do not feel quite as gorgeously painted, when gray skies loom heavy, or when obligations to my life and vocation just don't permit me to sit and soak as I have lately. In the lavishness of my recent vistas, I have learned about [God's] delight in my delight — in the joy that sends me running after a setting sun, squealing like a child again, literally chasing down the gift he is giving me. I have learned of that hundredfold which he promises. The skies proclaim: He is

never outdone in generosity. <https://www.radiantmagazine.com/2022/10/03/what-the-setting-sun-has-to-teach-us-about-gods-love/>

What are the stories, the promises, the insights that our prairie skies have shared with you? What have they told you about the Holy Mystery, the Ground of our Being? (wait for answers) The Voice of Creation, speaking in its wordless way, tells us of unlimited love and of the generosity of the Holy Mystery, that which can never be wholly known.

But there are so many other voices that are fighting to get our attention these days, especially those that we find on TV and social media. Yesterday, the top story on the CBC website was about a Russian site on the web that is being used to spread lies about Canadian and U.S. politics. In the article, an expert on disinformation was quoted as saying, “All these headlines seek to divide and polarize.” It’s scary that other countries in our world are using the voice of the Internet in an attempt to separate our people, destabilize our democracy, to ultimately hurt our country. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/russian-disinformation-1.7323128>

It’s one of the reasons why it is so important for us to listen to other voices, voices like the voice of creation that is all around us and the voice of wisdom that we find in the scriptures. Today’s scripture reading is basically divided into two parts. The first talks of creation and the second is focussed on God’s law. It begins:

Your law, YHWH, is perfect;
It refreshes the soul.
Your rule is to be trusted;
It gives wisdom to the naïve.

The writer is, no doubt talking about the laws as they are written in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. These laws include the Ten Commandments, Jewish cleanliness laws, property laws, liturgical rites, and even laws about marriage.

But as Jesus pointed out, these laws can be condensed into a very few words. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is quoted as saying:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all you soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Love God, love you neighbour as yourself. We have already discussed how, when we listen, the voice of creation teaches us about the love of God and helps us express our love and appreciation for all we have been given. But I believe that the voice of creation can also teach us about that second commandment, about how we live in relationship with others.

When we listen to creation, really listen, we can learn a lot about loving and caring for the people around us. In his book, "The Hidden Life of Trees," Peter Wohlleben, writes:

I've already mentioned that [beech trees] are capable of friendship and go so far as to feed each other. It is obviously not in a forest's best interest to lose its weaker members. If that were to happen, it would leave gaps that would disrupt the forest's sensitive microclimate with its dim light and high

humidity. If it weren't for the gap issue, every tree could develop freely and lead its own life. I say "could" because beeches, at least, seem to set a great deal of store by sharing resources.

Wohlleben, Peter. *The Hidden Life of Trees: 1 (The Mysteries of Nature)* (pp. 15-16). Greystone Books. Kindle Edition.

In his book, Peter Wohlleben then goes on to explain how that sharing takes place. He has spent a great deal of his life observing and listening to the voice of creation, in particular the voice of the forest. By listening he has heard the trees share their wisdom. He has observed that God's creation thrives when the weakest are cared for, when resources are shared, when neighbours care for each other. This is exactly what God's law is all about. It is why God's commandments are "more precious than gold" and "sweeter than honey."

These are just two examples of how creation's voice speaks to us about love: the love of God and loving each other. That love is expressed in how we care for our neighbour and how we care for the rest of creation. Whenever a part of creation is harmed, we all suffer.

May we listen for the voice of creation and let it teach us to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. May it be so. Amen.