

Creation Sings

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The aim of life is to live, and to live means to be aware, joyously, drunkenly, serenely, divinely aware. Henry Miller

The day I became a Christian I remember walking outdoors and suddenly becoming aware of the wonder of life around me. I noticed the greenness of the mountain that rose above our house, the colour of the flowers along the pathway. I could hear the birds singing in the hedgerows all around me.

‘What's happened?’ I thought. ‘Why is everything so alive?’

Then I realised. It wasn't the mountain, the flowers or the birds, but me. I had changed! I'd been born again and this was the first day of my new life. Everything was wearing its best clothes and singing its finest songs to welcome me into God's kingdom.

‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!’ they seemed to sing. I started to whistle a tune and walk with a spring in my step. Every day since then, for the past thirty-four years, I have felt most at one with creation when praising God.

Who has not marvelled at the beauty of a bird in flight, the colour of an opening flower, the green grass on the hill? Listening to the tumbling waters of a mountain stream, how can anyone remain unmoved among creation's splendour? Creation is its own cathedral, with the sky as its roof and the sounds of life filling the air. The trees, the birds, the wind and the streams provide the accompanying symphony to our worshipping hearts.

Everything God created has the ability and capacity to evoke eternal praise. ‘Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above Praise the Lord from the earth Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendour is above the earth and the heavens’ (Psalm 148:1, 7, 13).

The eagle climbing the sky, the breaking of ocean waves on the rocks, the sound of the wind in the trees—all remind us that not only men and women but all creation is straining to release its song of praise.

‘The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed’ (Romans 8:19). What new song will fill the universe when redeemed people and redeemed creation jointly express their worship to the King of kings!

Recently I drove through some of the loveliest parts of Scotland. The grey clouds made the tall mountains loom forebodingly over me like some stern schoolmaster, casting dark shadows over the heather-carpeted hillside. Yet how quickly they changed in the sunshine

to splendid, grand, smiling figures clothed in garments of green, brown, purple, red, white and yellow.

I looked down beautiful glens where hedgerows, like laceembroidered hemlines, neatly divided the fields. The sparkling waters of white-flowing rivers wove among the trees and on through fields dotted with contented animals.

The sheer beauty of the scene took my breath away. I wanted to lift my conductor's baton and call on mountains and hills, glens and rivers, streams and trees to join together in a great symphony of praise.

I think I understand the feelings of Isaiah as he prophesied the joyful uniting in worship of God's redeemed people and creation: 'You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands' (Isaiah 55:12).

All lovers of God understand the heart of David, who composed so many of his psalms on the hills of Bethlehem, while the clouds danced across the sky as earth's creation provided the music and song. From the hills he sang out to God's glorious creation to join him in praising God.

'Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn-shout for joy before the Lord, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy' (Psalm 98:4-8).

But no aspect of God's creation is more varied than humanity. One day, as I looked across the congregation, I realised what a mixture we were: the loud extrovert, the quiet introvert, the intense and the relaxed, the timid and the bold. I couldn't help wondering which of us made the best worshippers of God.

Then I remembered. Just as the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost, searching for them diligently, the Father is diligently seeking worshippers who, regardless of *personality*, praise without fear and love with abandonment. He wants those whose worship is genuine and released by the Spirit, unaffected by religious ritual and the leaven of hypocrisy.

'A time is coming and has now come,' Jesus said, 'when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are *the kind of worshippers the Father seeks*' (John 4:23).

Everything within us longs to confess our love and a oration of God who, though beyond our comprehension in his ways and his actions, nevertheless orders everything for our blessing and highest good.

So let us worship him. But in doing so we must not limit our concept of worship to our own individual expressions of praise, nor indeed to the corporate gatherings of God's people.

Worship can be an act on the part of the *whole universe*, seen and unseen. In choosing to approach the throne of God, we join the invisible multitudes of angelic beings, the host of believers on earth-and all creation.

I am privileged to work with a group of men who love God and who serve him joyfully together. Some of our most blessed times together have been when we have gone in spiritual retreat to spend time in prayer and worship. At such times God has broken in on us again and again, directing our paths, confirming our direction and quickening ' us for the task.

Much as I have enjoyed this and drawn great delight from it, there are still those times when I deliberately drive out into the country, up into hills, and walk alone. I love to stand on the mountain-top and let the keen wind blow in my face. I look up to the heavens and praise my God. I look down the valleys and marvel at his creation.

I feel at one with God and his universe and praise him from a love-filled heart.