

An Outdoor God!

'Life is this simple: we are living in a world that is absolutely transparent and the divine is shining through it all the time. This is not just a nice story or a fable, it is true.' Thomas Merton

Psalm 65 reminds us how the whole world is sustained by God, while this amazing ecosystem described in Genesis makes us aware of the web of life through which we encounter God. I've been thinking a lot recently how God communicates with us through our engagement with the natural world. The sense of God's presence is awakened by the sheer beauty, magnificence and wonder of creation, all pointing to God's greatness extending way beyond my understanding. At other times I may discover that God brings rest, healing, restoration or refreshment through it. Thus, 'He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet water, he refreshes my soul.'

At other times God addresses me personally and intimately through a specific experience within the natural world. Recently I was watching one of our regular visitors, a great spotted woodpecker making his way with such ease up the tree in our garden. I was reminded of how I am called to trust in God who helps at times when things in our lives seem insurmountable, keeping us from falling. Creation teaches us about the very nature and character of God. Alison Morgan* writes:

'...the psalmists do not simply illustrate through creation; they understand through creation. And so the natural world becomes both a channel for God's voice and a metaphorical one for our response.' p.93

Again Jesus often used illustrations from the natural world in his parables. Theologian C H Dodd, in his book on the parables, wrote about how Jesus used these illustrations not just as teaching aids, but how the physical and spiritual become one, and God speaks to us through the world God made. But we must remind ourselves that God doesn't just reveal through beauty, calm and peaceful places, but is also found in darker environments, in the storms and difficulties of life. Thus in Psalm 18:11 the psalmist describes how God 'made darkness his covering, his canopy around him – the dark rain clouds of the sky.' And of course: 'even though I go through the darkest valley I fear no evil...'

Contemplative prayer, making time to be still in God's presence, opens our eyes to see and our ears to hear God, leading to a conversation with God in and through creation. Alison Morgan again: 'The world is alive and you are part of it: it is time to join in the conversation, for God is with you.' (p.91) It is almost as if, at times, we have lost our peripheral vision, and we stumble back and forth when God is wanting to expand our vision to help us see God more clearly; or as Paul says, '...having the eyes of your heart enlightened...' (Eph 1:16).

So throughout the whole of the bible we are constantly reminded how creation reveals to us the character of God, summed up by Paul again in Romans 1:20 – 'Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been seen and understood through the things God has made.'

* Alison Morgan *World Turned Upside Down – The Psalms & the spirituality of pain* BRF

So as we go **into the silence** the fruit of that woodpecker moment:

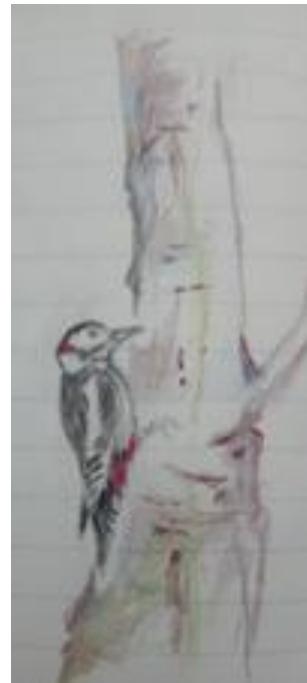
The Woodpecker

No scrambling, searching
for
footholds.

No clinging on,
You are an expert slider
upwards,
trusting you will reach
the top!
A smooth and sleek
ascender!

Oh to scale the heights
with such ease.

No need to grip,
to hang on
but held,
knowing we will never
fall.



Psalm 18.29 'with my God I can scale any wall'

To leave the silence

Out there

You are not an indoor God,
not confined by little minds.

Nothing holds you in...

unbounded!

Unrestrained!

Found in wild and spacious
places.

Exalted in the mountain
ranges.

Discovered in the hidden
spaces.

Revealing yourself in many
faces.

You are not an indoor God!