

Harvest Meditation on Psalm 104

Psalm 104

Bless the creator, my soul!

**God my creator, how great you are,
clothed in glory and majesty,
wrapped in a robe of light.**

You have spread out the sky like a tent,
built your dwelling above the rains.

**You have made the clouds your chariot,
you walk on the wings of the wind;
the storm becomes your herald
and your servants are bolts of light.**

You have set the earth in its place
so that it cannot be moved.

Like a cloak you wrapped the oceans round it,
with waters higher than mountains.

**At your rebuke the seas took flight,
at the voice of your thunder they fled,
flowing from mountains and valleys
to places decreed by you.**

There you set limits they might not pass,
lest they return to cover the earth.

**In the gullies you opened up springs,
to stream between the hills,
where wild animals drink from them,**

where wild asses quench their thirst;
where birds of the air nest on the banks

and sing among the leaves.

**From your dwelling you water the hills
and the earth drinks its fill of your gift.**

For cattle you make the grass grow,
and for people, the plants they need
to bring forth food from the earth
and wine to gladden their hearts.

**How countless are your works, O God;
all of them made so wisely;
a world teeming with creatures!**

All of them look to you
to give them food in due season.

You give and they gather;
you open your hand and they have their fill.

**Hide your face and they panic,
withdraw your spirit and they die;
they return to the dust from which they came.**

Send forth your spirit and life returns
renewing the face of the earth.

Glory to God for ever!

May God rejoice in creation!

**I will sing to God all my life,
make music to God as long as I live!**

Bless the creator, my soul!

Amen.

What we have here, sisters and brothers, is a harvest song.

The people in Israel sang the psalm on their pilgrimage to the temple. They walked through valleys decked with grain seeing the year crowned with good things; – filled with wonder and thankfulness not only for food and continuing life but for the sheer beauty of it all they sang...

If you have ever watched the morning light playing on rain-washed apples, looked at sunlit strawberries, dazzling red, or broad beans and cabbages as green as tomorrow, tasted crusty brown bread, soft at its heart, fried plantains that melt on the tongue and taste of sun and summer, the sweet floweriness of honey or the wonderful harmony of herbs, you will know that these are magical; and that it is difficult not to sing, dance and be thankful...

Be thankful for a beauty and an abundance which want to be shared.

Not storing but sharing is the best food security.

Hunger in a world of plenty is not caused by lack of food. There is enough food at the moment to make most people in the world fat! Hunger is caused by injustice. We don't lack food. We lack compassion: the compassion to see how things could be different.

Food in all its ordinariness calls us to enter the mystery of relationship with the earth and everything that's been created on it. The beauty of the earth and the joy of food invite us to see and respect our interconnectedness with all life.

We all belong together, we all depend on each other. If one of us is happy, all should rejoice. If one of us suffers, all are in need... And saying "one of us" does not only mean people, not only animals, not only living creatures. It means everything that's ever been created on our planet: the trees and the rivers, the autumn leaves and the mountains, the natural resources and the forests, the crops and the harvest, - and the way humanity is using them.

Thousands of years before smog, acid rain, global warming... the poet who wrote Psalm 104 was an environmentalist. He cared for the earth and all the life on it. He knew about the close connectedness and subtle interdependence of air, soil, water, plants and animals, including human beings.

In Hebrew the words earth and human are almost the same. Human beings, we all here, are creatures of the earth. And we all should be caring for the earth and share what the planet provides for us.

Today, as it were, we seem to have forgotten our roots. We seem to have forgotten where we come from...

The psalmist was not a scientist.

His awareness was grounded in theology. He was convinced of the profound interdependence of air, soil, water and all living things because he or she believed that everything comes from and was ultimately dependent upon God.

Nature is sacred. It cannot exist apart from God and God's renewing breath.

We are part of nature, we belong to God, and we live in God's world. Everything we do has an effect on God's world and thus on God. In the psalmist's world ecology and theology are inseparable. And that is what they should be in our world too.

The psalmist's environmental consciousness is of a different sort from that of most of us today.

It is important to realize and maybe to admit to that much of our concern for the future of the earth is motivated by our desire to maintain our current standard of living without destroying things so terribly that we cannot pass the same style of life to our children. In other words, our primary concern is ourselves, and our major motivation is fear.

In Psalm 104 another way is shown to us.

The primary concern is God and the major motivation is praise...

And praise involves to respect God as Lord over all, and to commit to live under God's rule.

Taking the psalmist as an example, we see that our concern for the earth shall begin with praise.

It may seem naïve, but it also can liberate us enormously.
We then understand that it is not us who save the world, God has already done it.
God has made everything for the life of the world.
The only problem is if someone disrupts God's design and destroys the delicate
balance God has put in place...
And here we must admit that we are on board... disrupting and destroying,
exploiting and wiping out...

At present it is the young people worldwide who are showing us the fatal
environmental crisis. It is the pupils and students who are now standing up and
warning us, claiming that an enormous amount of change needs to be done by
those who have the power and the say in this world.

It is the Greta Tunbergs of our time who praise and glorify God when they
demonstrate on Fridays for Future.
It is those courageous and smart young people who remind us that we live in God's
world and shall live in partnership with the trees of the earth and all living creatures
within it.
Nature does not exist to serve humanity. We exist to serve God and his creation!
...to keep it and protect it... to care for it and share it...

Psalm 104 was used on Pentecost Day to celebrate God's gifts and his spirit. It
gave new life to the discouraged and dispirited friends of Jesus who then went
about 'turning the world upside down.'

To follow the ideas of the psalm can make people at all times strong. It can help
them stand up for the future of the earth and help restore the sacred balance God
has given it right at the beginning.
Let not only Fridays be for the future, let us make Sundays for future, and
Mondays and Tuesdays, and every day – for the praise and the glory of God, the
creator. Amen.