

Manna Moments

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Scripture Psalm 104

Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honor and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills, giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst. By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.

From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the coney. You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.



People go out to their work and to their labor until the evening. O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD. Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD

Cont.

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Devotional

Pastor Tom Pederson

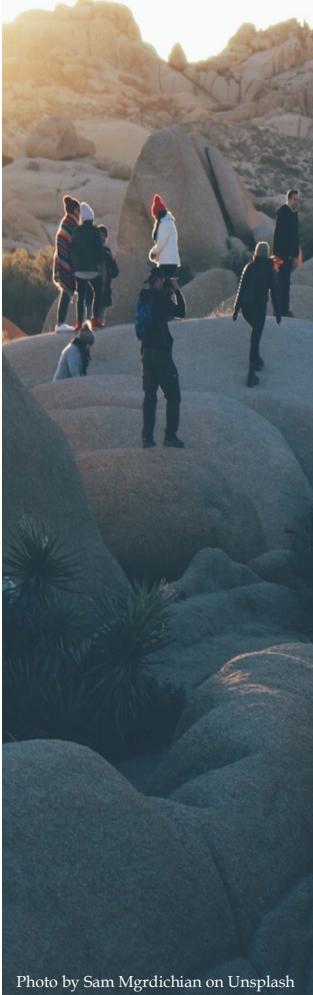
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"Little Rock"

There are more ways of knowing than intellectual knowledge. Wisdom, for example, is not knowing more, but knowing deeper. Sometimes emotion contributes to wisdom. "People live and die for emotional knowing more than rational knowing. Love, ecstasy, hatred, jealousy, fear, despair, anguish: each have their lessons."

(Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation) Lent is more of the heart than of the head and opens itself through emotion.

Wisdom is not far from another kind of knowing called "mysticism." Mystics sought to become one with God through meditation and release of self, another dimension of reality, and desired a direct experience with the divine. Lutherans are generally unfamiliar with mysticism. I was not introduced to the mystics of religion and history in all of my preparation for ministry. Music, I think, has been the closest thing to a mystical experience in most of my religious and secular life.



The mystics are many both Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American and on through varied traditions. St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, the Desert Fathers and Mothers, Hildegard of Bingen, St. Francis of Assisi, St Augustine, Thomas a'Kempis, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Keating...these Christian mystics stretch from the 3rd Century until the present time, and are but a few of the many over centuries that have walked this path.

Meister Eckhart was a Roman Catholic priest (1260-1328) a theologian, philosopher, and mystic. He lived in Germany and his writings had an influence on Martin Luther in the 1500's. He was excommunicated by the church that was fearful of his teachings. (Only recently was he restored to his place in the church.) Eckhart was known for his sermons that appealed to the common persons of his day. He is a complicated writer so I need to give greater credit to the "common people" who feasted on his words.

And, to finally get to the connection with Psalm 104, Meister Eckhart was a "creation spiritualist." He found God in the material, created world. God, he trusted, was "in" creation. Called "panentheism," this was different than "pantheism," the heretical idea that God is creation itself.

In Psalm 104 we find "panentheism." God is defined by the psalmist as "wrapped in light, riding on the wings of the wind, fire and flame are Gods ministers, clouds are the chariots of God." In like manner, darkness and night, the rising of the sun, the Leviathan, a monster that represents the chaos of the seas and storms, God is in all of these. God renews the face of the ground and so even the earth that we tread upon has God in it. The mystic would seek oneness with God through creation. Psalm 104 is a travelers guide for mystics.

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My friend and teacher, Herb Brokering, who with his wife wrote the hymn that has become a favorite of the church, "Earth and All Stars," gives us a mystical hymn teaching God in creation. He also wrote a little "ditty" in which he sings a song to a rock....that he calls "little rock." He wonders what this little rock might have seen through its long presence on earth. So, a mystic might pick up a stone from a stream or a shell on the beach and make it the subject of religious experience. We can all do this, from the youngest to the most senior among us. Empty yourself of yourself and open to creation.

Well then, when you feel a breeze on your cheek, when you step out on a cold and brisk winter morning and breathe in the crisp freshness, when you step out into the blackness of night or sense the power of the sea.....let go of all but your heart that remembers that God is "in, with, and under" all these things.....and is also "in" you as you seek conversation with your maker. Maybe you could make an offering....paint a rock, carve a toy, knit a fabric, write a poem, anything that is material and is your best work....then go by yourself, take it out where you are alone in creation and leave this offering somewhere to please God and to start a conversation with your maker. You will have known something of the mystics and of the psalmist.

Prayer or Thought of the Day

"If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you it will be enough."
Meister Eckhart

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