

Embrace the vision of creation as a revelation of God

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Pentecost + 19 b – Michaelmas – SoC 5 – Psalm 148

Psalm 148 is called a Hallel Psalm. It's one of the last five of the Psalms, and each one of them begins with the Hebrew exclamation 'Halleluia' – let's praise God! So a Hallel Psalm. As we've just seen, our Bibles translate that as 'Praise the Lord'. The first part of the word – Hallel – normally gets translated as 'praise'.

But we had an interesting time with this word in our study group on Tuesday because we found that you can just as easily translate Hallel as 'boast', like we find it in Psalm 34.2 – *My soul makes its boast in the Lord*. So boast or praise? Boast and praise are pretty similar in English; just the direction of reference is different – praise is usually aimed at someone else, boasting feels how it reflects back on us.

We have 'boast books' or 'brag books' full of photos and things that celebrate our children, grandchildren, pets, artworks, gardening exploits, travels – you name it. And we'll sing their praises to anyone who'll stand still for long enough to listen because they are *our* boast; they're *our* pride and joy. Anyone can see they're such a credit to us – so cute, so advanced, so unique, so perfect. And don't we love it when our little pride and joy reciprocates our boasting and celebrates us.

Boast books / brag books – Psalm 148 feels like someone has put together God's boast book / brag book. The Psalm calls our attention to creation's wonderful testimony to God's glory

(which, incidentally, is another word that translates אלהים). The heavens, angels, hosts – important to begin with them on the feast of Michael and all angels – sun, moon, stars, highest heavens and – remembering the first Genesis creation story's cosmology – the waters above the heavens – they all bear witness to the glory of God.

So too do all the great sea creatures and the oceans that give them life and a home; so too the great meteorological forces; all land-forms; the plant and animal and avian realms – and us too. All creation – from inanimate created things to living creatures, including us – we're all part of a mutual, interwoven relationship which boasts of the majesty of God. And in this, *our* ultimate depth of meaning is revealed; all creation praises the Name of the Lord – boasts of the Name of the Lord by its very being. This Psalm commands that all creation do just that.

But, of course, not all these things have voices, and that's where the other meaning of Hallel comes into play. Nature wordlessly boasts of the glory of its maker.

We began the Season of Creation by meditating on three verses from the scriptures. They were Genesis 1.3 – *Then God said 'Be Light', and light was...* the creative Word of God needed only to name whatever was in God's imagination, and it was.

The next verse was John 1.14 – *The Word became flesh...* This means the creative Word of God that we met speaking creation's birth in Genesis came to be born into Creation to break our bondage to decay. The Word lived among us and we have seen God's Glory in him most perfectly; astonishingly, in a creature like us!

And lastly there was Romans 1.20 – *God's power and nature have always been understood and seen through creation.* And that's still true, in spite of that bondage to decay which is so tragically tangible in our ongoing violation of Nature's

intricate harmony. *Ever since God created the world, his invisible qualities, both his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made.*

Tragically, as we look on, human civilization is destroying those very things. Our calling as people of God is to do everything in our power to confront and reverse that destruction – to work with God to nurture and restore Creation.

“...Christ embodies and reveals the invisible God in and through the natural world, [but] this means of revelation is ... becoming increasingly rare and precious. ... As we allow the diminishment of species and ecosystems, we diminish our ability – and the ability of future generations – to perceive the glory of God. This can no longer be peripheral to those who love Christ.”

VSB Colossians p. 177

As God's people, we are called to embrace this vision of creation as a revelation of God. We are to pray with hope that creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay, and that God will ultimately restore the Creation.

As we know, when we pray for something, God enlists us to become part of the answer to that prayer. Are we brave enough to pray this, and then to respond to God's call? I pray daily that we will be, and that more and more, Nature may go on beautifully and wordlessly boasting of the glory of our maker. Amen.