

THE Furrow

Worship in Place

June 2020

“The whole world is singing, but we’ve stopped listening.”

—from the 2015 documentary, “Racing Extinction”

Call to Worship

Psalm 19

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O
Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Hymn

This is God’s wondrous world,
And to my listening ears
All nature sings,
And round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is God’s wondrous world;
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas,
God’s hand the wonders wrought.

This is God's wondrous world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light,
The lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is God's wondrous world:
God shines in all that's fair,
In the rustling grass or mountain pass,
God's voice speaks everywhere.

--words by Maltbie Davenport Babcock, 1901 (revised)

Invocation

We do not draw you here, O God, but simply stop to pay close attention to your constant presence. In light and chirps and rustlings and breeze we hear your voice, and offer ourselves to your enlargement and your instruction. Open our ears and our hearts, that we, too, might sing your praise. Amen.

Readings

Humble and Exalted (by Kai Siedenburg)

In the humble
and exalted chapel
of my garden,

multitudes gather
to praise life
and celebrate
the miracle of creation.

The choir
starts up early
even before
the sunrise service,

the birds
openly
confessing
their joys
for all to hear.

The sun
and rain
minister
to the plants;

Bees
receive
holy communion
at the altar
of the flowers;
and trees
bestow
gentle benedictions
on all
who gather.

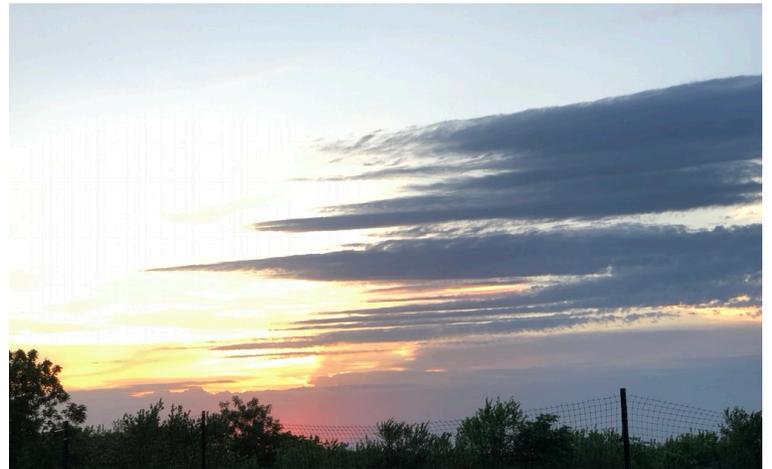
In this sanctuary,
all water is holy,
all ground is sacred,
and all beings
are chosen ones.

Job 12:7-10

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.”

The Wild Geese (by Wendell Berry)

Horseback on Sunday morning,
harvest over, we taste persimmon
and wild grape, sharp sweet
of summer's end. In time's maze
over fall fields, we name names
that went west from here, names
that rest on graves. We open
a persimmon seed to find the tree
that stands in promise,
pale, in the seed's marrow.
Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear,
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye
clear. What we need is here.



Spiritual Tool Options

- ✿ Cell phone camera (for “receiving images as gifts”, not “taking photos”)
- ✿ Mindfulness Bell app (free, with optional upgrade), or simply your phone's built-in timer
- ✿ Some means of recording experiences - journal, notepaper, voice recorder, etc.

Listening to Creation

- ✿ Read again the words of Psalm 19 that called this time into worship.
- ✿ We are accustomed to listening to many voices - those of friends and co-workers, those of politicians, television commentators and teachers in books and classrooms. Some have learned to listen to the voice of their heart. Most of us, however, ignore the voice of Creation. That is wasteful omission according to the psalmist; a neglect of precious wisdom, according to the book of Job.
- ✿ Find a comfortable spot outside. This might be in a chair on the deck or back yard, or seated on the ground against a tree in the park. It might be laying on your back looking up at the sky, or wherever you can be present to the sounds of nature.
- ✿ Offer a prayer for receptivity — as Wendell Berry advises, “...not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye clear,” trusting that, “What we need is here.”
- ✿ Consider - become mindful of - this “here” that is here.
- ✿ Set your timer - at least for 15 minutes; more if you are able - and invite nature to offer the sermon.

- ✿ Until the timer releases you, listen carefully to the sounds around you - and within you as you are addressed by the world around you. What is loud? What sounds are barely perceptible? What sounds are near enough to touch, and what are distant and remote? What sounds are ephemeral - here and then gone - and what are constant?

- ✿ In your notebook, journal or voice recorder, describe in detail the sounds you heard and how you felt about them. With your camera, receive the gift of images you might receive as icons of what you have heard?





✿ You are a part of the environment; include internal sounds as well as external sounds.

✿ Reflect on your notes. What insights or learnings surface? If nature is the “first Bible,” what has your listening suggested to you about God - or from God?

✿ Close with a prayer of self-offering, and for a heightened awareness of and gratitude for the “Glory of God” that is daily proclaimed by all that surrounds you. Pray, as well, that your own voice might add to the chorus - that “the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Listening in Community

✿ Consider sharing something of your experiences via the “Contact Us” tab at TheFurrow.org. We will look forward to posting a collage of the responses we receive.