

## Seeing God in Nature

June 12, 2005

By John Van Sloten

[READING PSALM 104 – w/earth images]

Over the past 12 days... a most amazing thing happening in our city... **PAUSE...** **beauty** has been birthed... **a mystery has been unveiled...** it's almost miraculous, if you stop to really think about it!...

Over this past week and a half 4 baby Robins have come to life tree in Barb's back yard... (been sending 'no flash' photos each day)... **[SHOW SLIDES]**

Isn't that amazing?... yet most of us had no idea it was going on... **PAUSE...** that it's going on in spades! That's only **one robin's nest...** of how many?... Robin's are **only one bird species...** of how many? How **many tens of thousands of times** played out past week?... **LONG PAUSE**

God watching over it all... I couldn't help but remember Jesus' words... "... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

**PAUSE...** This morning baptize a little baby boy named **Raiford Tyndall Smith...** **so valuable to God!**

**PAUSE...** This week read "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" Pulitzer prize winner 1974... what blew me away **How Annie Dillard can SEE!**... she sees everything!

Amazing, attentive, gift of perception... **PAUSE...** and in the perceiving gains amazing insight... into both this **amazing creation we're part of...** and into the heart of the God who **made and keeps** it all... **PAUSE** Reading her book I grew increasingly blind... **PAUSE** **"I am so totally unaware of what's going on around me in the natural world... moving so fast... got so much noise in my life... I often can't see a thing!"**

"At this latitude I'm spinning at 836 miles per hour round the earth's axis; I often fancy I feel my sweeping fall as a breakneck arc like the dive of dolphins, and the hollow rushing of wind raises the hair on my neck and the side of my face. In orbit around the sun I'm moving 64,800 miles an hour. The Solar system as a whole, like a merry go round unhinged, spins, bobs, and blinks at the speed of 43,200 miles per hour along a course set east of Hercules..." dillard 23... feeling queasy yet?...

"What else is going on this minute... the galaxy is careening in a slow, muffled widening. If a million solar systems are born every hour, then surely hundreds burst into being as I shift my weight to the other elbow. The sun's surface is now exploding; other stars implode and vanish, heavy and black out of sight. Meteorites are arcing to earth invisibly all day long. On the planet the winds are blowing; the polar easterlies, the westerlies, the northeast and southeast trades. Somewhere, someone under full sail is becalmed, a trapper is maddened by the eerie scent of a Chinook... The pampero blows, and the tramontane, and the Boro, sirocco, levanter, mistral. Lick a finger; feel the now!"

**LONG PAUSE...** "O my soul, bless GOD! GOD, my God, how great you are! beautifully, gloriously robed, Dressed up in sunshine, and all heaven stretched out for your tent. You built your palace on the ocean deeps, made a chariot out of clouds

and took off on wind--wings. You commandeered winds as messengers, appointed fire and flame as ambassadors. You set earth on a firm foundation so that nothing can shake it, ever.” 1-3  
Our hearts can do **nothing less than cry out in worship to God...** We are blown away by what he has made... and how it reflects who he is... in all his power and majesty!... **(Meditate on those two moon quotes alone this week your soul will shake!!)**

And yet we fail to see... God once spoke to a prophet; "Go and tell this people: 'Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.'  
Isaiah 6:9

Do you have any idea what you're missing?...

We've grown old... and lost our sight... "When we lose our innocence, we take leave of our senses. Only children can hear the song of the male house mouse. Only children keep their eyes open. The only thing they have got is sense; they have highly developed "input systems," admitting all data indiscriminately... a child will pick up everything." 91 **LONG PAUSE...**

**(DR. DRAMA MODE... pen and pad in hand... glasses on tip of nose)** "So let me see if I understand your problem correctly... you're going through life... can't see God anywhere!... want to know what to do? Hmm... very interesting"

Here is what I recommend...

- 1. Admit where you're at...** 'blind as a bat!'... as Thoreau said lost your senses!
- 2. Jettison some of 'sensory overload' activities in your life...** engender 'simplicity' (take Heather's courses on a Tuesday night instead of doing TV thing!) do more spiritual poverty see more with less!

**3. Learn to see like a kid...** with a 'Where's Waldo' kind of expectation... and tenacity! **PAUSE...** God is out there... if you'd only look!... **if you know what you're looking for! [BIBLE LENS – PSALMS!]** Only as you learn about God's character in one book learn to see him in the other!... **"God is faithful...** moon stays in orbit..." **"God is powerful...** supernovas occur... this week!... light from 160,000 yrs ago just hit Hubble telescope's expectant lens!"... **"God is beautiful..." "Caring, tender, loving..."**

(ADHD kid mode)... Did you know? "In the top inch of forest soil, biologists found 'an average of 1356 living creatures present in each square foot, including 865 mites, 265 spring tails, 22 millipedes, 19 adult beetles and various numbers of 12 other forms... Had an estimate also been made of the microscopic population, it might have ranged up to two billion bacteria and many millions of fungi, protozoa and algae – in a mere teaspoonful of soil." 95

"Trees seem to do their feats so effortlessly. Every year a given tree creates absolutely from scratch ninety-nine percent of its living parts. Water lifting up tree trunks can climb 150 feet an hour; in full summer a tree can, and does, heave a ton of water every day. A big elm (on Memorial Drive) in a single season might make as many as six million leaves, wholly intricate, without budging an inch; I couldn't even make one." P113

"Of a [cataract surgery] patient [decades ago], just after her bandages were removed, her doctor writes, 'The first things to attract her attention were her own hands; she looked at them very closely, moved them repeatedly to and fro, bent and stretched the fingers, and seemed greatly astonished at the sight... another twenty two year old girl was dazzled by the world's brightness and kept her eyes shut for two weeks. When at the end of that time she opened her eyes again, she

did not recognize any objects, but, 'the more she now directed her gaze upon everything about her, the more it could be seen how an expression of gratification and astonishment overspread her features; she repeatedly exclaimed; 'Oh God, how beautiful!'" Dillard 31

"Launch into the deep and you shall see" Jacques Ellul

"Observe, observe in the streets at twilight, when the day is cloudy, the loveliness and tenderness spread on the faces of men and women." Leonardo Davinci

"Never lose a holy curiosity." Einstein

"**listen... and see!**" says the Lord your God...

**LONG PAUSE...** Yet... "They would not listen; they turned a rebellious shoulder; they stopped their ears rather than hear; they made their hearts adamant rather than listen to the teaching and the words that Yahweh Sabaoth had sent them – by his Spirit- through the prophets in the past; and consequently the fury of Yahweh Sabaoth overtook them. And so, since when he called they would not listen, "I would not listen when they called.", says Yahweh Sabaoth, "but scattered them among all the nations unknown to them. Hence, after they had gone the country was deserted, and no one came or went. They had turned a land of delights into a desert." Zech 7:12-14

God to his people via Zechariah 2500 yrs ago...

How does a world so filled with beauty become a desert in our mind's eye?... **PAUSE...** Is there a rebellious part of us doesn't want to see God's glory in this amazing world?... or at least not attribute it to him?... or spend the time or thought to do that...

**That's not the way it's supposed to be... PAUSE...**

- Rivers rebel and flood their banks...
  - Creation get soiled; polluted...
  - Grizzly mothers maul human mothers to death...
- Everything out there meant for such beauty marred!

[WARNING - Cover young ears... entomological violence from the insect world about to be communicated...]

J. Henri Fabre, devout French insect lover writes of a wasp that preys on honey bees... "He describes a bee-eating wasp, the Philanthus, who has killed a honey bee. If the bee is heavy with honey, the wasp squeezes its crop, 'so as to make her disgorge the delicious syrup, which she drinks by licking the tongue with her unfortunate victim, in her death agony, sticks out of her mouth at full length... at the moment of some such horrible banquet, I have seen the wasp, with her prey, seized by the Mantis; the bandit was rifled by another bandit. And here is an awful detail: while the Mantis held her transfixed under the points of the double saw and already munching her belly, the wasp continued to lick the honey of her bee, unable to relinquish the delicious food even amid the terrors of death. Let us hasten to cast a veil over these horrors." Dillard 65

So much beauty round us... and yet so terribly broken!  
But God sees... **PAUSE...** and God hears... And then God heals... God heals as God enters... As God enters he redeems creation in its entirety... as he incarnates... walks our sod... sees our world... hears a bird cry... he brings new life.

In so doing Jesus opens our eyes... (to himself, to his Creator Father)... to God's revelation in this world. God makes us kids again... young in his garden once more. "**Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not**"

"You have to stalk the spirit, too. You can wait forgetful anywhere, for anywhere is the way of his fleet passage, and hope to catch him by the tail and shout something in his ear before he wrests away. Or you can pursue him wherever you dare, risking the shrunken sinew in the hollow of the thigh; you can bang on the door all night till the innkeeper relents, if he ever relents; and you can wait till you're hoarse or worse the cry for incarnation always in John Knoepfle's poem: "and Christ is red rover.... And the children are calling/ come over come over."... I am both waiting becalmed in the cliff of the rock and banging with all my will, calling like a child beating on a door:

Come on out!... I know you're there." **P207, Dillard and to those who knock, the door shall be opened... to those who seek, they shall find!... "Oh God how beautiful!!!"**

## Psalm 104

<sup>1</sup>O my soul, bless GOD! GOD, my God, how great you are!  
**beautifully**, gloriously robed,

<sup>2</sup>Dressed up in sunshine, and all heaven stretched out for your tent.

<sup>3</sup>You built your palace on the ocean deeps, made a chariot out of clouds and took off on wind--wings.

<sup>4</sup>You commandeered winds as messengers, appointed fire and flame as ambassadors.

<sup>5</sup>You set earth on a firm foundation so that nothing can shake it, ever.

<sup>6</sup>You blanketed earth with ocean, covered the mountains with deep waters;

<sup>7</sup>Then you roared and the water ran away-- your thunder crash put it to flight.

<sup>8</sup>Mountains pushed up, valleys spread out in the places you assigned them.

<sup>9</sup>You set boundaries between earth and sea; never again will earth be flooded.

<sup>10</sup>You started the springs and rivers, sent them flowing among the hills.

<sup>11</sup>All the wild animals now drink their fill, wild donkeys quench their thirst.

<sup>12</sup>Along the riverbanks the birds build nests... [SLIDE SHOW]

(robins) make their voices heard.

<sup>13</sup>You water the mountains from your heavenly cisterns; earth is supplied with plenty of water.

<sup>14</sup>You make grass grow for the livestock, hay for the animals that plow the ground.

Oh yes, God brings grain from the land,

<sup>15</sup>wine to make people happy, Their faces glowing with health, a people well-fed and hearty.

<sup>16</sup>GOD's trees are well-watered-- the Lebanon cedars he planted.

<sup>17</sup>Birds build their nests in those trees; look--the stork at home in the treetop.

<sup>18</sup>Mountain goats climb about the cliffs; badgers burrow among the rocks.

<sup>19</sup>The moon keeps track of the seasons, the sun is in charge of each day.

<sup>20</sup>When it's dark and night takes over, all the forest creatures come out.

<sup>21</sup>The young lions roar for their prey,

clamoring to God for their supper.

<sup>22</sup>When the sun comes up, they vanish,

lazily stretched out in their dens.

<sup>23</sup>Meanwhile, men and women go out to work,

busy at their jobs until evening.

<sup>24</sup>What a wildly wonderful world, GOD!

You made it all, with Wisdom at your side,  
made earth overflow with your wonderful creations...

<sup>27</sup>All the creatures look expectantly to you  
to give them their meals on time.

<sup>28</sup>You come, and they gather around;  
you open your hand and they eat from it.

<sup>29</sup>If you turned your back,  
they'd die in a minute--

Take back your Spirit and they die,  
revert to original mud;

<sup>30</sup>Send out your Spirit and they spring to life--  
the whole countryside in bloom and blossom.

<sup>31</sup>The glory of GOD-let it last forever!  
Let GOD enjoy his creation!

© 2005 John VanSloten

Feel free to use sermons, ideas and illustrations but acknowledge the source of these.  
If you know the source of a quote or illustration that is incorrectly acknowledged  
here,

please email me <[johnvs@newhopechurch.ca](mailto:johnvs@newhopechurch.ca)>

Unless otherwise stated scripture references are taken from  
The Message® or The New International Version®.