

Creator Spirit

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Ps. 104

The Rev. Dr. Chris Hagen
Lake Nokomis L. Ch., Mpls

My childhood was largely spent outdoors.
 In my early years, Mom was a stay-at-home mom to three lively boys,
 which nearly drove her nuts.
 So, she shoed us outside to spend most of our days.
 We did not have a lot of toys,
 but we did have a lot of adventures in our huge yard and the woods beyond.
 Summer was a time
 of playing in the sand of the driveway, making roads and rivers and villages,
 of catching beetles and chasing them through our village streets,
 of roly-polies and earthworms and butterflies and lightening bugs,
 of respectfully avoiding the great spiders that webbed our sweet corn,
 of homemade go-carts and spears made of sticks,
 of cracking rock against rock to discover wonders inside.
 In late elementary years, we were allowed to explore the vast woods across the road.
 Dizzying array of mushrooms, fungus and lichens.
 Ferns in low wet spots.
 Unusual flowers in shadows.
 Squirrels frolicking in trees.
 Birds calling out our presence.
 I would watch the wind move through leaves and grass,
 waves of wind wafting parachutes and dust,
 dancing throngs of gnats,
 and light shimmering in heat.
 Sometimes I would just sit in the shade of a hillside and watch the pageant unfold.
 For hours I would just sit and watch the birds and rabbits and wind.
 I learned to see the wind move,
 a burst brushing branches in order down the valley
 and birds floating the crest.
 I learned to see where the rain flowed
 and which flowers grew in wet and which in dry soil.
 I learned which plants were edible and which were delicious even.
 In middle school we ventured farther.
 Dad let my brothers and I use his rifle and we shot squirrels for dinner.
 We rode bicycles to local creeks and caught trout and bullheads,
 cleaned and froze them for Friday fish fries.
 Our childhood was immersed in woods and sky and wind.

I tell this because nature, trees and flowers and creatures,
 inform me of the Holy Spirit who creates and nurtures and delights
 in this world that is so much more marvelous
 than just people who think so highly of ourselves.
Pentecost so often dwells on a day in Jerusalem,
 where a crowd heard God's word each in their own language,
 and speculation on *how* this could be.
 Lost is the significance of the Holy Spirit infusing people again,
 as God Spirit bursts through the natural world always.
 The human error is tendency to think our image of God,
 created *like* God, *makes* us god, puts *us* in center of all.
 We forget our created-ness and shrink our worldview to paltry self,
 dwelling on whether we are succeeding,
 dwelling on being right,
 sorting out who is good enough according to some arbitrary standard we invent.

The risk in reading this second chapter of Acts
is to make it about us and some moralism about overcoming differences.

I propose reading the second chapter of Acts as about *God the Spirit*
testifying to us that God is on a bold mission,
that God is deeply, profoundly, powerfully insinuated
into this physical, social, political world.

It's not about people instantly speaking in foreign languages.
It's about God's Holy Spirit inspiring, breathing into, moving and driving,
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Do you see it?

Do you see the Holy Spirit bursting now?

Do you see a younger generation *prophesying*,
declaring *new* policies and *different* economics,
proclaiming a better way than the poverty-inducing politics of current America?

Do you hear their *visions*?

Visions of America where no one is refused health care,
a vision where all children get enough to eat,
a vision where parents can afford to stay at home
during critical early months of child development,
a vision where where transportation infrastructure
is more than just for cars and those who can afford them,
a vision where where character matters more than skin-color,
a vision where where a person's worth is based on their *being* and not on money.

Do you *dream*?

Do you dream of a day
when violence is no more,
when suspicion gives way to sharing,
when joy replaces gratification.?

God's Spirit has come and blows life in cramped corners of shriveled souls.

I read Psalm 104 often to remember that God's concern is so much grander
that human navel-gazing, moralizing, chasing meaning.

Psalm 104 is one of my favorites.

It makes me recall the world I once knew as a child exploring yard and woods.

Psalm 104 describes God the Holy Spirit.

We Lutherans sometimes spin in circles around God's grace and faith and forgiveness.

This psalm awakens us to a world beyond our personal relationship with our Redeemer
and tells us of an impish, artistic, delightful God

who sometimes creates just for the sheer fun of it!

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

O Lord my God, thou art so very great!

Thou art clothed with honor and majesty,

who coverest thyself with light as with a garment,

who hast stretched out the heavens like a tent,

who hast laid the beams of thy chambers on waters,

who makest the clouds thy chariot,

who ridest on the wings of the wind,

who makest the winds thy messengers,

fire and flame thy ministers.

O my soul, bless and praise and sing to God!

Not self and justification,

but God and God's glory and God's greatness!

Honor and majesty and light,
 cloud chariots riding wind wings, fire and flame forging foundations!
 This Lord, this God creates and sets seas in their places,
 shoves sky apart from earth,
 shapes mountains, dribbles rivers, paints plants and sews creatures,
 builds nations and drives communities.

*Thou makest springs gush forth in the valleys;
 they flow between the hills,
 they give drink to every beast of the field;
 the wild asses quench their thirst.
 By them the birds of the air have their habitation;
 they sing among the branches...
 Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
 and plants for humans to cultivate,
 that they may bring forth food from the earth
 —and wine to gladden the human heart...*

God's desire and God's world is made to sustain life of beasts and birds and humankind.

Water flows to quench thirst.
 Green grass for cattle to feast.
 Grain and vegetables for us to eat.

God gives this all.

God is known as one who wondrously creates

and one who sustains this creation, blessing us with all we need for life.

God is Creator and loving Giver who wants us to delight in God's work of art.

And so the curious verse,

“Thou givest wine to gladden the human heart!”

God wants this world to be enjoyable,

for us to celebrate and revel for the sheer fun of it!

Then one of my favorite lines, a verse that reveals God's frisky humor,

*O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
 In wisdom hast thou made them all;
 the earth is full of thy creatures.
 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
 which teems with things innumerable,
 living things both small and great.
 There go the ships—
 and Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it.*

The great seas teeming with fish and sharks and squids and clams,
 great seas cradling ocean liners, cruise ships and great cargos.

And then for the sheer fun of it, *what the heck*,

God tosses in some huge whales, for no good purpose, for no important use,
except that God thought it funny!

Is your God some somber sour-puss scanning for suspect secrets?

Is your God aloof, apart, caring less about minor human struggles,

too busy thinking big thoughts like space-time continuum and bending gravity?

My God thinks it funny how Mallards mate,

paints skies with rainbows,

gives happiness to anyone listening to children laugh.

My God moves hearts to house families in churches,

gathers food from those who have so as to share with those who don't,

invites sharing space not for what *we* get but a greater gift *for all*.

My God evokes song and induces jokes,
blesses coffee fellowship,
smiles in people passing by.
My God is so intimately involved in this creation
creating wondrously, loving deeply,
nurturing generously, protecting fiercely,
making right constantly, leading faithfully,
and dancing all about for us to notice.

I marvel at the gift of tongues at that first Pentecost.
I thank God for the gift of church inspired that day.
But Pentecost for me is every day,
God bustling through our spaces and in our hearts
shaping and renewing and delighting and playing.
Pentecost is for me
awakening to see God's might works happening before our very eyes!
Do you see it too?
Do you marvel and wonder and delight?
Does the wind waving branches stir your heart with joy?