

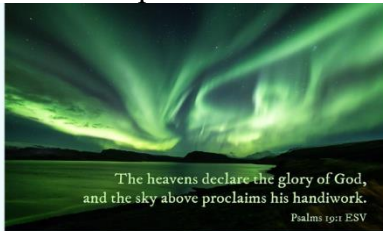
## Our Colorful Creator

One of the precious aspects of shalom is praising God, our Colorful Creator. “The Lord in whom we live and move and have our being, who created us and continually sustains us, has revealed himself to us as the beautiful, creative, soul-enriching, transcendent, breathtaking God he really is. In other words, God, the Sovereign Creator, is the colorful Reality in which we receive and live out the gospel...

In fact, before God ever made known the specifics of his character and purposes for his creation, he revealed himself through his creation. We do not begin existence as abstract truths comprehended by disembodied minds. We grow in awareness through physically experiencing the wonders of creation...and the more we learn about our world, the more wondrous it seems that the planet should sustain life at all. It requires the perfect properties of water and atmosphere in the essential proportions, the exact gravitational pull, the precise speed of the planet's rotation, the ideal distance from the sun, and a host of other necessities for physical life to exist. Change any of these factors and we all die.” (David Shelley, Senior Pastor at the Bethel Baptist Church in Greeley, CO)

In fact, an article in *Discovery* magazine noted a new study that suggests there are around 700 quintillion planets in the universe, but only one like Earth. The article states:

Astrophysicist Erik Zackrisson from Uppsala University in Sweden arrived at this staggering figure—a 7 followed by 20 zeros—with the aid of a computer model...In a galaxy like the Milky Way, for example, most of the planets Zackrisson's model generated looked very different than Earth—they were larger, older and very unlikely to support life...For a planet to sustain life it must orbit in the "habitable zone" of a star—the "Goldilocks" region where the temperature is just right and liquid water can exist. For us mortals on this planet all creation points to God's reality. As the Bible says "The heavens declare the glory of God, *The skies proclaim*



*the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard."* And so we respond: O Lord, our Lord how majestic is Your name in all the earth!

This merging of nature and worship has been one of the gifts of salvation for me from my earliest days as a Christian. In fact it became an assurance of my salvation when I heard the words to the hymn: “Heavenly above is softer blue, earth beneath is sweeter green, something dwells in every hue Christless eyes have never seen. Birds with gladder song overflow, flowers with sweeter beauties shine, since I know as now I know, I am His and He is mine.” (Loved with everlasting love, v. 2). I was amazed that this literally described my experience after conversion and has delighted me ever since. If you notice, many of the paintings we have in the house are landscapes –celebrating life at the ocean, in the garden, in the woods bedecked with azaleas, that we saw at the Biltmore estate in Ashville North Carolina. That picture has particularly relates to our theme because the last years of when my father was still alive, there was a great darkness in their home fueled by constant criticism by my Mom and alcohol. When we would go visit them, so that the darkness would not overpower us, we would drive to the Biltmore estate and walk in the woods among the azaleas to get reconnected with Our Creator God and worship Him.

This restoration through the wonders of creation and worship is why it is linked to shalom. When our hearts have been touched by this God, and our hearts are freed from their myopic self-focus, we are free to turn our focus away from ourselves and consider the works of His hands. Meditating on the beauty of God's creation is a balm for the soul. Wouldn't you agree?

A pastor named David Shelley tells of his experience on the outer banks of North Carolina: “In the 100-degree heat, under an oppressive afternoon sun, we climbed a boardwalk over the twelve-foot dunes, between sea grasses and wind-blown palm trees, and came in sight of that vast horizon of rolling waters we call the Atlantic Ocean. Few sights in life can compare to the humbling effect of gazing across the unknown depths and distances of the ocean. As Dad snapped photos and Marshall and I kicked off our shoes and waded in the first few inches of those awesome, green depths, the salt wind whipped our faces, the sand gave way under our cooling feet...I thought of the multi-shaped masterpieces that swim in its dark world below the surface and the

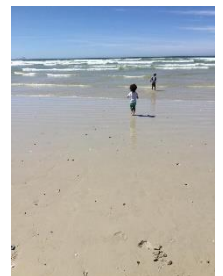
people who walked these shores centuries ago. I thought of the Creator who conceived it all, sustains it all, and still cares specifically about me, a speck on a speck of his universe. I prayed, "Lord, You grant blessings like this to take my breath away; free me from my chronic proneness to be nearsighted and petty—to treat insignificant things as though they were big and great things as though they were small." Creation overwhelmed me with the awareness of a Master Artist who made all this in awe-inspiring detail—someone so great and powerful that he could sustain every molecule; someone so intimate that he knows me inside and out; someone so unlimited that he cares about a nobody like me, along with every other nobody in his marvelous creation."

I track with the worship of that man! And I expect we all do, so I wanted to have our members both here and overseas tell their stories of how creation in their country has led them to worship and love our Colorful Creator. Jonathan Edwards has said, "Nature is God's greatest evangelist." So we will now share the pictures and words our members overseas have sent. Their stories are interwoven with scenes from members who are right here, so as their slides come up, each of them can share in person how these scenes led them to worship God as their Colorful Creator. This way we will all preach this sermon together!! I have pasted these pictures into the sermon so those of you who get to read this sermon from another place, can also be blessed in your worship of the works of God's hands in beauty around the world.



First up is Sam – with his picture taken on a hiking trip in Alberta Canada. In his words "This is the most beautiful spot on earth I have ever seen and those colors are not photoshopped!"

Hilary in South Africa said 3 things there spoke of God's majesty: the vastness of the ocean, the majesty of the mountains and the colorful diversity of God's children.



Evan shared beautiful mountain scenes from North Carolina and several of us told stories of the beautiful sunsets in the U.S, and Hong Kong and how this beauty speaks to us.







Dionisio from Brazil shared pictures of Iguazu Falls, in Southern Brazil, and Baio do Sancho, a beach in Northeast Brazil.



Hanny and Given both shared pictures of mountains and water from Indonesia:



Tuvsho in Mongolia sent these pics:



Miyuki celebrated the four distinct seasons in Japan, as an evidence of our Colorful Creator. And Erin included an extraordinary vista taken in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in the US in the summer.





Bing and Emily described their mountain climbing in China.



Jingjing and Alex  
Also celebrated the beauty of the mountains in China:



Left: photo from Zhejiang province, Alex's home town.

Right: From Jingjing, Wuyi Mountains in Fujian province



This is what I've experienced on our outings. Yes, we are taking these trips to build up body endurance for the long trip to Florida in the winter. But I am also taking the trips for restoration of soul and expanding my mind and soul as I delight in the Lord's creation and in his people in so many different walks of life. I was glad Keith could join me on this trip to Lake Michigan.



Like so many of our members, I see God's greatness in wonderful water vistas. Rayna agrees. She sent this picture with these words: "This is Paces Ferry entrance to the Chattahoochee River. I love this place. It is naturally serene, just like God...Alone, I survey keenly all of God's creation: the trees, the current, the clouds, the insects etc. I talk to Him here. He is noticeably everywhere."



### God our Creator is also our Sustainer

But there's one more aspect to the shalom which comes with worship of God as our Creator – it is that our Creator God also sustains His people whom He created. As Col.1:17 says *Jesus holds the universe together by the word of His power*, so I know He can hold me and everyone else together as well. God's sustaining power is what gives us security. He hold the whole world in His hand and that includes each of us and the people and nations we care for.

This is what King David understood so well and why he could end even his psalms of lament with praise and trust. Psalm 16 is one of the key psalms about our security in God and it starts: *Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.* v1. He goes on in v. 7-11:

*The wise counsel GOD gives when I'm awake is confirmed by my sleeping heart.*

*Day and night I'll stick with GOD; I've got a good thing going and I'm not letting go.*

As a result, listen to his description of shalom:

<sup>9-10</sup> *I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed.*

*You canceled my ticket to hell— that's not my destination!*

<sup>11</sup> *Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face.*

*Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way. [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Amen!!*

These other psalms also speak of God's sustaining hand:

*Ps. 37 says the Lord upholds us by His righteous right hand – though we stumble we will not fall* v. 24

*Ps. 54:4 says the Lord is the upholder of my life. And Ps. 55 22 says Cast your burdens upon the Lord and He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to fall, he is at their right hand.*

So, what are your burdens? What does it mean to you that He will sustain you – as you carry them? It gives me confidence and hope. Remember that what God brings into being, as our Colorful Creator, He also holds together. Our Colorful Creator is our soul's sustainer and protector.

May these pictures of His grandeur around the world and celebration of His majesty give your soul rest and well-being and build His shalom in you – for His glory. Amen.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson 7/7/19