

## “Morning Watch”

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning (Psalm 130:6).

According to my calculations I had packed the only thing that I needed in order to wait like a watchman for the Lord in the morning. I'm talking about my morning coffee---the key item in my personal survival kit. And so I was thankful when the Lord graced me with the foresight to include a coffee pot, coffee, and cups in our camping list of cooking supplies to bring. What I failed to factor in however, was that according to Biblical faith---watching for the Lord in the morning is more than survival of the self . . . it's about the thriving of our soul by the breath of the Holy Spirit. Because I failed to factor in this faith I didn't know that the Holy Spirit had secretly included Psalm 42:1-2 in our camping supply list.

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?

The answer for us was---in four days of rain---meeting God in creation as the Mystery of Renewal which is full of grace, generosity at the heart of life, and always humorous.

In her forward to the book, *CHERISH THE EARTH: Reflections on a Living Planet* Kathy Galloway wrote: *It used to be in Scotland that every child was expected to know the Shorter Catechism by heart, and to be able to answer the question, "What is man's chief end?" with the words, "Man's chief end is to glorify God." As people of faith, we are called above all to celebrate God. But GOD is an abstract concept.*

*So we celebrate what we see, God revealed in the creation:  
We celebrate what we trust, God-with-us in Jesus;  
We celebrate what we experience, God's Spirit moving among people,  
reconciling and liberating,  
We celebrate what we hope for,*

*God's commonwealth of justice and love,  
and beyond all these,*

*We celebrate the mystery of grace and generosity at the heart of life.  
(forward to Cherish the Earth: Reflections on a Living Planet by Mary Lou)*

As people of faith the purpose of our camping trip to Acadia National Park in Maine was to celebrate what we see, God revealed in the creation. One of the ways in which we developed that 3-D vision of faith was Morning Watch. Like the singer in psalm 130 our morning watch consisted of nature's classroom, personal reflection, reading of scripture, and prayer.

Our watch on Tuesday focused on God revealed in acts of praise.  
After reading, Psalm 148 . . .

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above.  
Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.  
Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.  
Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters about the skies.  
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.  
He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.  
Praise the Lord from the earth,

you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,  
lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,  
you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,  
wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,  
kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,  
young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted,  
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.  
He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints of Israel,  
the people close to his heart.

Praise the Lord.

. . . after praying the psalm morning watchers looked up, down, and around until we found something that claimed our attention. Then we drew a picture, wrote a prayer, or tapped out a tune of that creation praising God. Two drew sun rays piercing through the cloud in praise

of God; another drew a picture of a rock with swirls in it (revealing God's swirling act of creation), and another wrote a prayer (Thank you, O Heavenly Praised One, for implanting within us the ability to gaze upon your majestic works of life, and then for empowering us to overlook the actions of your other creatures placed here on earth).

On Wednesday we focused on God revealed in creation's wisdom. After reading psalm 19:1-2 . . .

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.

. . . and after reading the list of Things You Can Learn From a Dog by Dick Clinton: Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride; allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy; when loved ones come home, always run to greet them; let others know when they've invaded your territory; take naps and stretch before rising; run, romp and play daily; eat with gusto and enthusiasm; be loyal; never pretend to be something you're not; if what you want lies buried, dig until you find it; when someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them; gently; thrive on attention and let people touch you; avoid biting when a simple growl will do; on hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shaggy tree; when you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body; no matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout--- run right back and make friends; bond with your pack; delight in the simple joy of a long walk.

. . . after reading the list and after looking up, down, and around for something that claimed their attention, morning watchers wrote their own version of what you can learn from something in nature's classroom. So, what can you learn from a rock? How about---when the opportunity comes, sit on a rock and enjoy its company. It represents the tough situations in life. And, how might a wise rock pray? God of the earth, stand in the way of unjust laws. Amen. What can you learn from a tree? Stand tall no matter what happens; be silent and observe what's around you; grow until you can't grow

anymore. What can you learn from the sea? Be cautious, entranced, awed, relaxed, and alert at once; be able to change as need be; if you try your hardest, eventually what you work to accomplish will happen. How might a wise sea pray? Shifter God, your creations teach us many meaningful lessons. May we acknowledge your glorious warnings. Amen. What can we learn from pine needles? Each needle represents a different aspect of God blessing us; the pine needles are all different sizes, resembling how each one of us is different. How might a pine needle pray? Author of the Word of Life, thank you for giving us your everlasting example of how we should live and interact with all of your creation. Amen.

On Thursday our focus was caring for God's earth. After reading psalm 24:1-2 . . .

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world,  
and all who live in it, for he founded it upon the seas,  
and established it upon the waters.

. . . and after remembering God's command to human beings to care for creation like God takes care of us, and after choosing something that claimed the morning watcher's attention---we answered the question: How does the thing that claimed your attention want you to care for it? Morning watchers answered: **Nature** wants me to appreciate and conserve it; the **sun** wants me to let it light up my life; the **HOT SHOWERS** sign wants us to feel good about being clean; the **raptor** on the bathroom door wants me to leave it be; the **coke bottle** wants me to recycle it . . . and because of the coke bottle's need that morning watcher prayed: Reusable God, Thank you for telling me to recycle it. I have to confess that I have not recycled when I could have. I asked for others to recycle too. I hope that the bottle is recycled and I have helped it. Amen.

The moral of our morning watch story is that eleven souls did more than survive --- we thrived. And beyond this, the good news for morning watchers of the non-camping kind is that you can pray with the Renewing Spirit who loves to celebrate life for your thriving too.