

All nature sings

## **God loves the creation. In response the creation sings praise and adoration to God.**

December 7, 2013



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In my childhood church we often sang the old hymn “This Is My Father’s World.” The masculine image of God offends many, so we don’t sing the hymn much anymore. But recently a line from that hymn has been playing in my mind: “All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.”

The hymn probably won’t stand up to rigorous theological analysis given its quasi-panteism (“In the rustling grass I hear Him pass”). Yet it recalls an important and early biblical motif, a statement of faith in the face of a Babylonian dualism that attributed creation to a secondary, lesser deity. Genesis 1 proclaims that God is one and that God creates everything that is and calls it good. God loves the creation. In response the creation sings praise and adoration to God.

The psalmists add their voices:

The Lord is King. The world is firmly established . . . let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar . . . [let] the fields exult . . . Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy. (Ps. 96)

Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills sing together for joy. (Ps. 98)

While theologians criticize natural theology for diminishing the centrality of Christ, the Bible keeps suggesting that the natural order recognizes and reveals the Creator and responds with a joyful cacophony of hills and trees singing and clapping. In other words, all nature sings!

From beginning to end the Bible affirms that the created order is dignified and blessed by the One who created it and loves it and that at the center of the story is incarnation. It is the bedrock Christian affirmation: God so loves the world as to become part of it, enfleshed in humanness, blessing the world and everything in it by coming to live in it and redeem it. Incarnation is at least in part an affirmation about the world, its sacredness, its importance to God and the blessedness of the human life that God came into.

Is there a more remarkable and powerful idea than God choosing to come into and redeem the world in the same way every one of us came into history—through the visceral pain and blood of human birth, in the life of a young man, his teaching and healing, his suffering and tragic dying, his mysterious resurrection? I have come to understand that incarnation says at least as much about the world, nature and humankind as it does about God.

Our familiar carols reach all the way back to the creation story's remarkable affirmation that creation is good; they echo the psalmist's proclamation that creation responds to God's goodness and that all nature sings in praise and adoration.

What an incredible affirmation we are making when we join our voices with the whole chorus of creation!

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heav'n and nature sing!