

DEEP CALLS TO DEEP: SUMMER IN THE PSALMS

Reviving The Soul

Psalms 19

August 9, 2026

For the last couple of months, we have been in our “Summer in the Psalms” sermon series, drawing from the deep well of this ancient prayer and hymn book. For thousands of years, the Psalms have been a vital source of worship and spiritual nourishment for people of faith in every season of life. John Calvin called the Psalms:

“an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which our minds are wont to be agitated.”¹

In other words, whatever we are going through in life, there’s a Psalm for that. When we struggle to find them, the Psalms give us words to articulate both our joy and pain, as well as promises to anchor us in troubled times. Whether we are happy, sad, mad, stuck, confused, anxious, afraid, hesitant, or hopeful...the depths of our souls are given voice in the prayerbook of the Psalms. Jesus knew this, and it’s why you’ll find him quoting Psalms more than any other book of the Bible. The New Testament authors knew this as well, and it’s why the New Testament draws from the Psalms more than any other book. Jesus’ last words on the cross are drawn from the Psalms. The days and nights he spent on the mountain in prayer were likely marinated in Psalms. If we would know the heart and mind of Jesus and soul of the New Testament, we would do well to spend time praying the Psalms.

Our psalm for this morning takes us out of the sanctuary, built by human hands and into the heavens and earth, fashioned by the Almighty. For those of you who find more beauty in nature than anywhere else, this one’s for you. In a time when we are face down in our screens for more hours than we than we can track, this psalm calls us to look up Pay attention: not to your inbox or feed, not to what’s trending or trailing, not to your job or home, not to yourself or even your family or friends.

Stop.

Look to the stars. Consider the sun: “nothing is hid from its heat.” Gaze upon the earth, teeming with life - flying, walking, crawling, swimming. They all speak of God, without words. More than that, they praise their Creator, giving glory to God.

I hope you’ve felt this before. I hope that some of the psalmist’s experience has been shared by you. The Psalms aren’t alone in encouraging us to get outside and look around. Healthcare professionals in the Western world have been touting the benefits of Japanese practice of “forest bathing.” The Cleveland Clinic tells us that forest bathing “reduces cortisol,” and helps us to be “so keenly aware of the beauty of the world around [us] that the deep emotions [we] feel can’t be expressed with words.”² Our Psalmist would agree.

I recall a member of the church I served in New Jersey, where our boys were baptized, describing her experience of God in creation. She was with the protein data bank at Rutgers University, and described the experience she had watching proteins folding under the microscope, as if she was watching the hand of God at work in the building blocks of life; knitting life into being (Psalm 139:13).

Personally speaking, one of the first experiences I had of hearing nature's witness to God came when I was very young. It's one of my oldest memories. My mom was sick, and I was going to stay with my grandparents for a few days. I was too young to understand what was happening, and I was scared. My grandparents were driving me from my house to their house - about thirty minutes, but it felt like an eternity.

Sensing my fear and confusion, they asked me to look out the back window of the car and spot the moon. "See it?" Yes, I saw it. "See the man in the moon?" "Yes." "That man in the moon is going to follow us all the way from your house to our house. He'll be with you the whole time."

I needed to hear that - it was an echo of what this Psalm says about the sun; and what the sun says about God: nothing is hidden from God. Nothing can separate us from God's love. It is a foreshadowing of that great promise in Romans 8: "I am convinced that (nothing) is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord..

Yes, nature speaks:

There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Our Psalm witnesses not only to the unmatched beauty of creation, but of the function of that beauty: to praise its Creator, to point to the One who made it, and to reflect the Glory of God in all of its diversity and magnificence.

This leads us to a common pitfall in our appreciation of creation. It can be easy to get so caught up in the awesomeness of nature that we lose sight of the God of nature. Again and again, the pages of scripture warn us that creation is not to be confused with its Creator. In reflecting on this Psalm, C.S. Lewis says that worshipping nature rather than the God who created it silences what nature is actually telling us, "as if a child or a savage were so impressed with the postman's uniform that he omitted to take in the letters."³ There is

a word for worshipping creation rather than the Creator: idolatry. History has repeatedly shown us, up through the present day, the devastation left in idolatry's trail.

And so, the second part of our psalm shifts our attention from the book of God found in nature to the book of God found in scripture - specifically, the torah, also known as law of God. The transition may like a non-sequitur, but it tracks. As Old Testament scholar James May points out, "Just as the sun's warmth benefits all life, the torah is life-giving and enhancing. The heavens have no voice, but the torah of the LORD is word in many forms. The creation does not speak, but the LORD has spoken in *t Torah*."⁴

One of my favorite metaphors for the law of God comes from this pulpit - from a sermon series preached by our Senior Pastor Emeritus, Bill Enright. Now, it's always dangerous to cite someone who is in the room....but here goes. [Any errors in presentation or application are all mine!] Bill compares the function of the law to that of channel markers. If you've ever piloted a boat, or even been a passenger on one, you may have noticed buoys as you approach the edge of a channel, or even a river or lake. These buoys are put in place to warn you not to go past them. You may not see it, but beyond the buoys is shallow water, with rocks, logs, an all manner of things that will crack your hull or propellor. [This may or may not be something I've learned from experience...] Those markers are there to keep us and our who are in our care safe, and to keep our ship on course for smooth sailing.

In the same way, the law of God, the commandments of God, are in place to keep us out of the unseen and unnecessary shoals of life. Early in the life of Israel, God gave them commandments, laws to follow so that they would flourish, as individuals and as a nation. We know the top 10: the Ten Commandments. But the Old Testament is filled with laws of all kinds. Some of them seem foreign and confusing to us - "don't eat shellfish," and the like. Some of them we still follow, others we don't. Why?

The late preacher, Haddon Robinson, helps with an illustration he calls, “the law of the Stop sign, and the law of fire.” Stop signs are put in place to keep us safe at certain pressure points of high traffic flow. However, stop signs can be moved if traffic patterns change. They can also, as we know all too well around here, be turned into roundabouts. Fire, however, simply burns. There is no changing that fact. You may try to test it, but break the law of fire, and you will always get burned.

Whether the law is that of the Stop sign or of fire, the point is that these are meant to keep us from harm, and to contribute to the order and flourishing of life.

More than that, we’re told that the law *revives our soul*, makes us wise, rejoices our heart, and enlightens our eyes. This is a common theme in the Psalms, beginning with Psalm 1. Those who meditate on the law are like “trees planted by streams of water,” whereas those who pay no heed to it are like “chaff scattered in the wind.” It’s “more to be desired than gold,” and “sweeter than honey.”

Why such glowing language? It hardly seems fitting for something like a stop sign or a buoy. It seems more fitting for something like a sunset over the ocean, or a meal with your most cherished companion.

Perhaps it reflects the stark contrast between the barbaric laws and practices of the neighbors of ancient Israel and the life-giving laws given to them by the Lord, their covenant partner and shepherd. Another way of saying this, in the words of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz: “there’s no place like home.” We yearn for the ways and practices that nurtured and loved us into being.

It’s also a matter of perspective. The torah, and even more so, the full breadth of God’s Word, gives us eyes to see the glory of God all around us, everywhere we look. To paraphrase Calvin, all of creation is a theater of God’s glory when seen through the lens of Scripture. If we look at nature with only our own eyes and judgement, it’s true that we see beauty, but we also see the vicious, the callous and the tragic. We see the law of the jungle, and can feel less than insignificant. We look at others and

may compare and despair. Or, we may look at ourselves with inflated egos, blind to our hidden faults, which become visible only through the lens of God’s Word.

To see clearly, we need to look through the spectacles of Scripture. The author of Hebrews echoes our psalmist regarding the incisive clarity Scripture provides: “the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Two good questions to ask ourselves are these: “What’s your story?” and “Is it true?” Better yet (since none of us is the center of the universe), “What’s *our* story?” and “Is *that* true?”. Our screens and platforms and politicians and influencers are all hoping to provide us a definitive answer to these questions. None of them have it.

The story that is that is at the center of our story is that of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The more immersed we are in God’s Word, the more we can see how deeply our story, and, indeed, the story of all of creation, are a part of that story.

As we see our life, and the world around us through the lens of God’s Word, we will see that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts are not only acceptable, but are trustworthy witnesses to our Rock and Redeemer. Then, God-willing, we will join the chorus of all of creation praising our Creator.

Amen.

¹ John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA, 2010), xxxvii.

² “Forest Bathing: What It Is and Its Potential Benefits” (December 6, 2023). Cleveland Clinic. Retrieved July 30, 2026 from <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-forest-therapy-can-be-good-for-your-body-and-mind>.

³ Lewis, C. S., Reflections on the Psalms (p. 97). (Function). Kindle Edition.⁴ Richard Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity: Finding Harmony in a Complex World*, 55-59.

⁴ James Luther Mays, Psalms, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 98.