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Weekly reflection

Bible reading: Psalm 104:24-34

How many are your works, Lord!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number –
living things both large and small.
There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.
When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.
When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.
When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works –
he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the Lord.

Reflection

Question: What do Adelaide (Australia), Barcelona (Spain), South Carolina (USA), Santiago (Chile), Lopburi (Thailand), Llandudno (Wales) and Harold Hill (east London) have in common?

Answer: They're all places that have seen the return during COVID-19 lockdown of animals to places where they are normally kept at bay by human activity (kangaroos, boar, alligators, pumas, monkeys, goats and deer respectively) ([bbc.co.uk/newsround/51977924](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51977924)).

This psalm is a glorious reminder of the creativity and imagination of God, and of the way our understanding of who he is is expanded when we are willing and able to see and value *all* that he has made.

Like many of you, I have come to appreciate my very small garden in new ways during lockdown. I live on the edge of Leicester city centre and from my front door I can see no green at all (unless you count the weeds growing between the paving stones). So my garden – just 4m x 3m – has become a complete oasis, particularly in those early weeks of lockdown when our movement was so heavily restricted.

But as well as spending much more time in the garden myself, and having the opportunity to pay it more attention and invest more time in it, I've also seen an increase in visitors to it. I'm not a bird-watcher and my ornithological knowledge is woefully limited, but even I've can tell that the variety and number of birds visiting my garden has increased this year.

As my garden moves from spring to summer and the range of flowering plants increases, my feathered friends are being joined by their insect counterparts and I've begun to enjoy the sight of bees disappearing up the bells of my foxgloves, resting on roses and exploring tobacco plants. Caterpillars have been munching on leaves; I tolerated that for a little while and then took evasive but non-life-threatening action to limit it!

And although I'm generally more of a flower grower than a veg grower, I have, like many others – some for the first time – decided to grow more edibles this year, and so my side return contains tubs of potatoes, strawberries, courgettes and tomatoes. Before these provide me with food they will provide more pollen and nectar for my winged and crawling friends, a reminder that Creator God really does feed all of his creation.

As restrictions on human movement begin to lift (at least for the time being), may we not forget those images of pumas, monkeys, goats and deer reclaiming streets around the world, and our own experiences of increased wildlife in our gardens, assuming we are fortunate enough to have one. May we remember that we are all God's creatures.

Louise Davis, Training Manager and Country Way Editor, Arthur Rank Centre

Prayer (from Psalm 104)

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works.
I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the Lord.
Amen.

Response

If you have a garden...

Take time to appreciate it today. Pay attention to the birds, insects and other creatures that have made it their home. Thank God for the imagination and creativity that he invests in his creation.

Then, **if you are able to do so whilst complying with the most up-to-date government guidelines**, consider inviting someone to join you in your garden. Is there someone that you know has spent lockdown alone and would value company now restrictions have eased?

If you cannot do this safely, why not pick some flowers from your garden and take them to a neighbour or friend? Consider sharing spare tomato, courgette or herb plants with others.

If you don't have a garden...

Go for a walk on a route that will take you past the gardens of others, or alongside a flowering hedgerow or field. Pay attention to the birds, insects and other creatures that have made it their home. Thank God for the imagination and creativity that he invests in his creation.

If you can do so safely, consider inviting someone you haven't seen for a while to join you. Ensure your route will enable you to stay two metres apart