

With Great Joy
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Psalm 93

¹ The LORD is king, he is robed in majesty;
the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength.
He has established the world; it shall never be moved;
² your throne is established from of old;
you are from everlasting.

³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.

⁴ More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is the LORD!

⁵ Your decrees are very sure;
holiness befits your house,
O LORD, for evermore.

Luke 24:44-53

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

We’ve become a bit immune to these readings, to the things which Jesus did, the things which God has done. Yeah, yeah, God created the world. Yeah, Jesus died for us, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. But...wow! Just wow. The psalmist proclaims

that even the scariest of scary things – the unpredictable and overpowering floods – can get loud and threatening but they are no match at all for God. Pastor Robert V. Thompson puts it this way: “What could be mightier than the power of the external world than the power that animates the external world?”¹ The psalmist goes on about God’s majesty: “he is robed in majesty;” “More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!” Sure, just as we think of nations’ royalty as His or Her Majesty, there is an element of leadership to this word choice. That makes sense since the psalmist also refers to God as king and to God’s throne.

Majesty, though, is also defined by Merriam-Webster as “a great and impressively beautiful quality.”² On a warm day, have you ever pondered with incredulity all the growing things? Have you observed the intricacy of a flower? On a wintry day, have you marveled at the miniature geometry of a snowflake? If you’ve been around a baby, have you been in awe of miniature hands and tiny fingernails? Or maybe the intricacies of you? What about the wonders of furry pet feet? These are a micro-fraction, a nano-fraction, of the wonders of God’s creation and God is greater than them all combined. Wow, right?

I can understand how easy it is to become immune to the world around us, even how desirable that can be, because if our eyes are opened for the beauty, they can’t help but be opened to the hurt and pain. The psalmist knew this. In one breath the psalmist speaks of the wonder of God, and in the next of the terrors of the mighty floodwaters. That fear is millennia-old. We recognize today the fear of the fires in Fort McMurray. And God? God is greater than those – greater than the tornado, tsunami, and earthquake combined. God is so great that the created order has more varieties than we can count and variations within those remarkable varieties.

If you’ve seen the latest version of *The Jungle Book*, you likely found a need to remind yourself that the rich depth of the jungle was all computer-generated. And even though it all looks marvelously unique, when animating with a computer, it’s not only easier to repeat a created patch of leaves in another area of the shot, it’s more efficient. Not so

¹ *Feasting on the Word: Year A, Volume 2*, p. 505.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/majesty>

with God. God doesn't take the easy route. God is not concerned with efficiency – a ridiculous human construct. After all, this is the same God who walked among us giving focused attention to individual after individual. After all, how efficient is it for God to come as just one person? God does indeed have a great and impressively beautiful quality; God **is** this great and impressively beautiful quality.

God's majesty is greater than the floods, and all other powerful acts of nature, things we fear and avoid. More than that? God's majesty is greater than the thing we fear and avoid the most: death. We come to the gospel of Luke after the beyond-comprehension defeat of death shown by Jesus' resurrection. I mean, really. We're happy to stave off the years with so-called miracle creams but God undid what we consider the greatest indignity – the death of the body. And in Luke's telling today, Jesus used his time during his return to continue teaching the disciples, right up until the moment when God brought him back into heaven, via an other-worldly tractor beam, if paintings of the event are any indication. So not only can God finish death but God can bridge the gap between this world and the heavenly world. Wow. That would put Houdini, David Copperfield, and David Blaine to shame if it were an illusion but there is no magic here, just majesty.

And after the disciples witnessed this, they worshipped Jesus and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There is wonder in this world. We may not be the privileged ones who see Christ return to heaven but there are so many other things in this world at which to wonder. Amidst the floods which assail us, there are so many other things in this world at which to wonder. The disciples mourned the absence of their friend and teacher and in the same moment were filled with great joy for the wonder of it all, and with anticipation for even greater things to come by the Spirit. Next week we will celebrate the coming of the Spirit. Between now and then, I challenge you to open your eyes to the greatness of God in things big and small each day this week. Your eyes will be opened to the pain of the world as well but its presence doesn't remove the presence of the wonder. Return to your homes and schools and places of employment and families and friends with great joy, while you await the Spirit. So may it be for you and for me.

Let us pray: O Lord, you are from everlasting and majestic from on high. Open our eyes to your greatness amidst our own floods, we pray. Amen.