

I'll begin by bridging the Season of Creation, which we concluded last week, with the series on the Psalms we are beginning today. This is a threshold moment.

I'll create this bridge by sharing a portion of C.S. Lewis' novel, *The Magician's Nephew*. This book is the prequel to the better known *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Two children, Digory and Polly, are magically whisked away from Earth, and brought into a formless void. This excerpt speaks to the creation of the land of Narnia.

*In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing... the most beautiful noise (Digory) had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it... Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out... If you had seen and heard it..., you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing...*

*The Voice on the earth was now louder and more triumphant; but the voices in the sky, after singing loudly with it for a time, began to get fainter... Far away, and down near the horizon, the sky began to turn gray. A light wind, very fresh, began to stir. The sky, in that one place, grew slowly and steadily paler. You could see shapes of hills standing up dark against it. All the time the Voice went on singing...*

*The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose... The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and vivid. They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else.*

*It was a Lion. Huge, shaggy, and bright it stood facing the risen sun. Its mouth was wide open in song and it was about three hundred yards away... And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave... Soon there were other things besides grass. The slopes grew dark with heather... And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes (Polly) was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction... But now the song had once more changed. It was more like what we should call a tune, but it was also far wilder. It made you want to run and jump and climb... Showers of birds came out of the trees. Butterflies fluttered. Bees got to work on the flowers as if they hadn't a second to lose... And now you could hardly hear the song of the Lion; there was so much cawing, cooing, crowing, braying, neighing, baying, barking, lowing, bleating, and trumpeting... Then there came a swift flash like a fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children's bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying: 'Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.' <sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> C.S Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (New York: HarperTrophy, 1983), chapters 8–9.

Credit: <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/reflections-september-2019/>

I'm sure there are many other allusions for the Psalms of praise in the broad, wide library of literature in the world, but for my money, this one of C.S. Lewis' is pretty remarkable. When the psalmist writes

the Lord made the heavens.

...

7 Let the sea roar and all that fills it,  
the world and those who live in it.

8 Let the floods clap their hands;  
let the hills sing together for joy

9 at the presence of the Lord.

Lewis textures it with sound and color, allowing our imaginations to go there and turn the eons of Creation into a visual scene where life forms and makes a joyful noise before its Creator.

As the Chronicles of Narnia unfold, and knowing that C.S. Lewis was a Christian theologian, it becomes rather unmistakable that the Lion, Aslan, is undoubtedly a representative for The Christ. And so, Lewis leans heavily into the Gospel of John who places the Word of God as a present, active agent in the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. And every living being – every creature, plant, star and rock – returns their song of praise to the One who sings them into being. And as Jim said during our bible study on Thursday, the psalmist “places us in the whole flow of creation,” and therefore we sing our praises, too! And today, we celebrate those psalms that offer praise to God – and encourage us to “sing God a new song” with each unfolding day. Not just in the sanctuary on a Sunday morning, but any time, we are moved in gratitude for the gift of life, and the wonder of the world around us.

Not to get too deep into *The Magicians Nephew*, but while Polly and Digory are marveling over the masterful work of the Lion, Digory's uncle, Andrew, is scheming for how he can finagle a hold on power in this magical world. He is happy to do whatever is necessary to get it, including to seek to be in league with the White Witch who desires to bring Aslan down. Digory and Polly's wonder will only carry them so far as they get caught up in the shadow side of Andrew's lust for power. As we heard during the Season of Creation, all was not paradisiacal in Eden. And as we experience in our daily lives, all is not without its peril.

As we move throughout our series of the psalms we will go where they go – down into the pits of Sheol; wondering when God will show up; praying for intervention and even harm to one's enemies. Yes, the psalmists go there. They mirror our raw feelings and emotions and express them with exclamation points. **They trust that God can handle it.**

They are also aware that while our anger may burn hot, and our pain throb blue, God calls upon us to TRUST that God will be faithful. In fact, God expects it. As is expressed in today's psalms, and I'll now finish the sentence where I left off before,

8 Let the floods clap their hands;

let the hills sing together for joy

9 at the presence of the Lord, for Adonai is coming

to judge the earth.

God will judge the world with righteousness

and the peoples with equity.

The whole earth rejoices ***because God judges the world with righteousness and the people with equity***. Everyone wants to be treated fairly – everyone wants to be able to be fully who God created them to be – everyone wants those like Digory’s Uncle Andrew to be transformed into embracing God’s love for the world instead of seeing God as one to be feared and battled ... needing to subjugate others in order to feel worth for themselves.

So, each day we are called to, in the words of Philippians 2:12-13, “be energetic in (y)our life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God (God)self willing and working at what will give (God) the most pleasure.”

When the psalmists offered their praise of God, it was with deep respect, awe, and gratitude for God’s generosity in grace and love. And so they were continually reminding themselves to lift up their voices:

- 1 O sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the Lord; bless God’s name;  
tell of God’s salvation from day to day.

One of the places where we sing God’s salvation on a regular basis is at the communion table. For the sake of time, we do not usually voice God’s history with the People of the Covenant. Recall that Jesus was celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples. The seder is all about recalling the story of God’s presence with the people during their bondage in Egypt, and God’s agency in liberating them through the blood of the Egyptians. It would have been after remembering God’s covenants with the people through Moses that Jesus would

have picked up the chalice and said, “Friends, this cup represents the NEW covenant sealed in my own blood. Tonight we sing to God a new song. And forever forward you will sing the song of salvation in me.” Jesus, the resurrection and the life, is the song that we are still singing.

So, let us prepare to “sing with all the people of God and join in the hymn of all creation. (For) this is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!” (“This Is the Feast of Victory,” *Glory to God* 513)