



BLESSED TO BECOME A BLESSING

Our neighbor sent a cautionary text. While walking his dog, he spotted a big mother bear on our street, and her three cubs up a nearby tree. We have dogs, too, so it's nice to know when to yield the right-of-way to the apex animal that roams our plateau. Last year I learned firsthand that while bear cubs are adorable, amusing little things, their protective mama is one ferocious, no-nonsense, force of nature. So we respectfully stayed inside, and posted ourselves at the front window, hoping to glimpse the furry family from a wise vantage point.

We waited, expectantly. How fun, how special it would be to see this entourage: Mama Bear, large-and-in-charge, as she leads, feeds, and musters her cubs, while they roughhouse and tumble like young mammals do. I had never seen a three-cub family — this was going to be great!

But although we waited and waited, gazing steadily up the street and poised to catch the visit on video, no bears appeared. After a while, we sadly surmised that they had wandered off in a different direction. Apparently, no grand sighting was in store for us that afternoon. Or was there?

Although an exhilarating bear family sighting was not to be, we were nonetheless treated to a spectacular visit on a much smaller scale. While hoping to see bears, I saw a hummingbird. Yes, I see hummingbirds several times daily on our flowers; but may I never get over how amazing and beautiful those unique little creatures are.

Who else can beat their wings 70 times per minute, hovering in midair or even flying backward, as they visit a thousand flowers in a single day? How can I not be astonished that these tiny, ruby-throated hummers can make a nonstop, 500-mile journey across the Gulf of Mexico in less than a day?

Yes, the rare sight of huge, furry beasts strolling through our yard would be cause to give thanks to God. Yet, so should the small, frequent visitors be noticed, with thanks, as evidence of God's daily favor and boundless creativity. Similarly, we find both extraordinary and everyday evidence of God in the Bible.

Imagine the spectacle of fire falling from heaven to consume not only a holy sacrifice, but also the altar and every drop of water in the trench surrounding it, as the prophet Elijah boldly prayed to the one and only God, after hundreds of frenzied pagan prophets had invoked their false god for hours but to no avail (1 Kings 18:16-39).

Or picture the quiet hillside outside the little town of Bethlehem, when suddenly the night sky burst forth with light, as "a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests'" (Luke 2:13-14).

These and so many more examples in the Bible record truly spectacular displays of God's supernatural power, which we can understandably desire to witness, as devotees of the same God that empowered those scenes. Yet the Bible also captures God's movement in very small things.

When He spoke to Elijah on another occasion, it was not in the great, strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in "the sound of a low whisper" (1 Kings 19:11-13). And that dramatic assembly of angels praising God above the fields of Bethlehem? It was totally eclipsed by the humble scene of an ordinary looking baby, "wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger", the very Word of God made flesh (Luke 2:12, 16; John 1:14).

So as we rightly yearn for grand displays of God's glory and power, may we also hold precious the small but equally spectacular ways God reveals himself to us continually. We need only feel our pulse, or take a breath, for "in his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10).

With love in the Lord,
The Rev. Christine Maddux