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# Diversity and Presence

CURTIS MCCLANE

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The flaming forsythia surrounded by the pink tulip blossoms heralded a new era in my life. This was my first time to welcome spring in east Tennessee. The emerging signs of the new season were breath-taking and awe-inspiring. The dancing daffodils on the hillsides of Pellissippi Parkway invited me to join in their gleeful play. Yellow, white, butter-and-eggs: a combination to thrill even the most casual observer. Catching the blue, misty mountains against the foreground of yellow-dotted, verdant hillsides was a quintessential spring portrait that even Terry Redlin would be hard pressed to replicate on his palate.

The delicate, reticent redbud trees were fun to spot. They seemed to play hide and seek around buildings, underneath larger trees, and clinging to the mountainsides. But the seasoned spotter soon can pick out the unique shade of “red” dappling the entire lengths of each branch.

The full-blossomed Bradford pear trees are all shrouded with their innocent white. Many are seemingly arrayed in companionship as they line streets and parking lots. They stand as spring’s virgin brides dressed in the purity of the new season, anticipating the warmer days ahead.

Meeting God in the created order is a formative spiritual experience. Who has not felt the mystery of God whispered in the wispy clouds over a sunlit lake in the morning? Who has not sensed the presence of God in the dew-laden drops clinging to the full-blossomed rose? Who has not seen the tip of eternity as the last fiery rays of the sun dip down below the farthest mountain range in the west? Who has not heard the voice of God in the lonely call of the whippoorwill reverberating through the dimly lit forest?

One sunlit afternoon while I was in meditation beside a little stream, I witnessed the playful dance of five different colors of dragonflies. Sitting there in quiet contemplation, God put the following poem on my heart:

*Glimpses of God: Diversity and Presence*

Thoughts flitted and darted in the afternoon sun,  
As I sat listening to the babbling brook,  
Attention was stolen and I just had to look,  
At the dragon fly dance that had just begun.  
Sunrays glistened on wing-ed steel,  
Metallic boldness for the moment flashing,  
Presence here and there—zipping and dashing,  
Colors of red, blue, black, brown and teal.

Divine hues and tones could tell,  
Diversity of creation with lessons to teach,  
Insights and ponderings rising from each,  
My soul in the Divine Presence to dwell.

Glimpses of barn red a story to share,  
 Blood and sacrifice, energy and life,  
 Struggles and purpose, conflict and strife,  
 Wings surrendered to God's providential care.

Glimpses of baby blue like heaven from afar,  
 Distant and eternal, mysterious and sweet,  
 Calm and composed, silent and complete.  
 Wings borne aloft by God to distant star.

Glimpses of black so penetrating and stark,  
 Lifeless and frozen, cold and still,  
 Ominous and foreboding, determination and will,  
 Wings in rebellion from a world so dark.

Glimpses of brown with moments so pensive,  
 Tender and soft, rich and masculine,  
 Reflective and nostalgic, gracious and fine,  
 Wings motionless as a contemplative.

Glimpses of teal so playful and clean,  
 Sharp and dazzling, penetrating and clear,  
 Effulgence and radiance, close and near,  
 Wings in readiness never to be seen.

As I sat in the sun that afternoon,  
 Beside the gurgling and swirling brook,  
 I was ever so briefly permitted to look,  
 And to hear the diversity and presence of the divine tune.

The quiet whisper of motionless wings,  
 Ever so still with baited breath,  
 Giving the impression of being frozen in death,  
 Ever so tightly to the Queen Anne's lace clings.

God, I felt your mysterious presence that day,  
 Epiphany of colors and dance,  
 Choreography for my attendance,  
 Vision and message—here is what I heard You say:

My son, listen to my words without askance,  
 With ears tuned to hear my voice,  
 Giving reason for your heart to rejoice,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

My son, do you not see my diversity and presence,  
 Color and design purposefully chosen,  
 Creation and existence purposefully interwoven,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance?

My son, when you pause in stillness giving Me half a chance,  
 Allowing me to break into your little world,  
 Heart pried open and self unfurled,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

My son, I sent you this experience to enhance,  
 Your awareness of Me in and through all things,  
 So that constantly your heart sings,  
 Along with gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

My son, you saw Me work as a freelance,  
 Scripting the narrative in thin air,  
 Providing the plot as bold as I dare,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

My son, I saw you in a mystical trance,  
 Captivated by the aerial show around,  
 Immersed in the simple and the profound,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

Now, my son, arise with a new parlance,  
 Prompted to witness with a message to speak,  
 Moment by moment others to seek,  
 With gossamer wings in the dragonfly dance.

Sensing God's voice, presence, and lessons in the created world is nothing new to God's people. I call this "parablizing of nature," i.e., listening to divine wisdom by connecting to creation as part of the created. Isaiah the prophet capitalized on this aspect of God's revelation when he challenged Israel to do the same thing in the following passage:

Listen and hear my voice;  
 pay attention and hear what I say.  
 When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually?  
 Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil?  
 When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin?  
 Does he not plant wheat in its place,  
 barley in its plot,  
 and spelt in its field?  
 His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. Caraway is not threshed with a sledge,  
 nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin;  
 caraway is beaten out with a rod,  
 and cummin with a stick.  
 Grain must be ground to make bread;

so one does not go on threshing it forever.  
Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it,  
his horses do not grind it.  
All this also comes from the LORD Almighty,  
wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.  
(Isa 28:23-29)

We need to take time to listen and hear God's voice. It is from such simple, mundane things as planting, harvesting, growing, and nature itself that we do indeed come into touch with the wonderful counsel and the magnificent wisdom of the Lord Almighty!

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