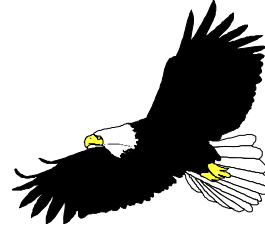




Articulating the Spiritual Values of Wilderness

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Touching the Spirit of Wilderness

A Narrative Poem Expressing
the Spiritual Values of Wilderness

A poem composed by committee
Redwood National Park

June 6-10, 2001

There's a rhythm of time to creation, and a timelessness.
A frog basks in the sun next to us, a bird banks close by.
Each alone, seemingly complete - pictures of contentment.
This rhythm infills us as we sit on a rocky point;
We sense it best in solitude - even a solitude numbering six.

So off goes your watch without thinking,
Mounted on your wrist, it looks silly.
Operating on God's pace and time,
There's a feeling of wholeness;
Eating when hungry, letting go - opening up.



Opening up to the font of prophesy,
Opening up to the experience of all.

Wilderness teaches in its time, on its terms,
To all who will listen. We are in the wilderness to listen.
It feels right to listen, and to attend. It satisfies. We feel at peace.

Jesus gives all creation the promise of contentment
In the Kingdom of Heaven;
Behold . . . we are surrounded by contentment.
Creation sings praises to the Creator;
In the roar of the surf, in the ruffling wind,
And the songs and beauty of every living thing.

Here, we sit where God's creation is most intact,
Unshrouded by human contrivance.
Intimately aware of our Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer,
Here - the Trinity touches each of us,
And we join all creation in praise and thanksgiving.

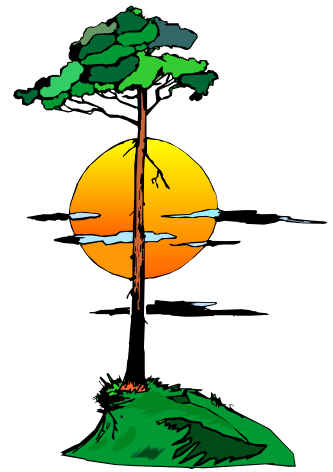
From time immemorial, prophets go to the wilderness
To know God. To be filled with his Spirit.
God created us with an unsettling core need,
Aching until we know it's God that will fill it.
We go to the wilderness to be changed.

God isn't silent. His love is always pouring, always shining.
We just don't pay attention.
Wilderness transforms us - we open and expose ourselves to Him.
Scripture makes clear that God is always available.
We aren't. Wilderness strips away the distractions.
We open . . . and God fills us.



At first, in the presence of God's majesty, we feel awe-struck
And insignificant before it . . . like a contrite Job.
Then we feel significant indeed, being created in His image,
Bearing responsibility to bring others to this gift of vision,
And to protect the places where such visions of God's love exist.

In wilderness, our insignificance is swept into God's wholeness;
We wonder why we've been away so long,
Away from the peace that quiets our souls.
Wilderness calls us to be subservient to God,
And as we die to ourselves, God becomes more immanent within us.



Surrounding us everywhere is death in life and life in death.
Green shoots from dead trunks,
Great trees are gashed with rotted heartwood.
This is where our egos die,
And the Holy Spirit renews us.

For in the wilderness is the breath of God,
A breath only to be heard in silence.
Wilderness is the inhale and exhale of Yahweh, in his rhythms.
It stresses to us the basics of life. Indeed,
Here is the breath of life created, and the waters purified and gathered.

Wilderness awakens a need for the Sabbath within us,
It teaches us the cadence of God.
The purifying experience of wilderness brings us to obedience,
It opens a window to the sacred, and we honor the commandment:
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.

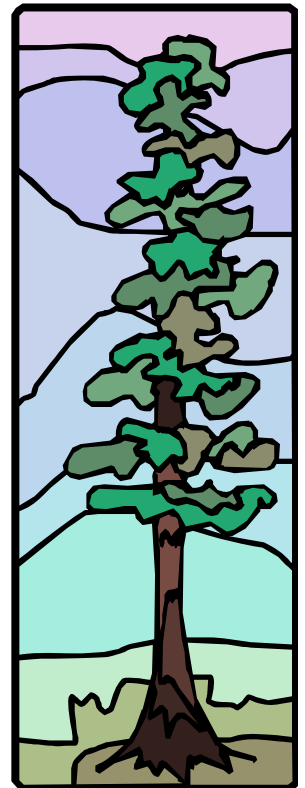
We learn obedience.
We'll die if we don't obey the laws of the wild,
The laws of God writ boldly in all of creation.
We'll die if we don't obey the laws of God,
writ boldly in Scripture and upon our hearts.
The loss of wilderness surely increases ignorance.

Moses learned in the wilderness to trust in God;
We pray for the same wisdom.
Jesus went to the wilderness and hillsides to pray;
"I am the Way," he said, and we follow.
The transparency of wilderness shows the Creator,
And the example of Christ leads us there.

Wilderness teaches us the necessity of community:
We aren't the center of the universe.
The necessity of communion is obvious in the interrelatedness
All around us. Vibrant, interdependent community is everywhere.
"Love your neighbor as yourself" rings in our souls.



Awe and inspiration are our response to wilderness;
With reverence for the Creator and restraint toward creation.
Banging gongs and clanging cymbals have no appeal here.
Restraint is love manifest - the opposite of selfishness and greed;
We are engulfed by humility.



And yet . . . it's presumptuous to do what we're attempting:
Explaining the spiritual value of wilderness. Nothing we can say
Describes the healing power of God in wilderness.

Like prayer, we can't explain the power and the meaning
Of the wilderness experience.
Our strongest rhetoric is experience itself:
Go! That's our message.

Go, and be healed. You will become healers.

Go, and be taught. You will become teachers.

Go, and receive prophesy. You will become prophets.

Go . . . and be still . . . and know that He is God;

Receive the fruit of the Spirit.



Now . . . we return to our cities, our homes, our jobs,
With the prayerful hope that we live and walk
By the fruit of the Spirit which blossomed in wilderness;

Love, Joy, Peace,
Patience, Kindness, Goodness,
Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control.

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