

This Is My Father's World

"I am going out to see my Father's world!" Maltbie Babcock announced to his church staff as he laced up his running shoes. The staff of the First Presbyterian Church in Lockport, NY, were used to their pastor making this statement as he went on his daily early-morning run. He would run two miles to the brow of a hill overlooking Lake Ontario, taking in all the beauty of God's creation. He would then run two more miles to a beautiful, deep ravine, which was home to forty different species of birds. Maltbie found a closeness to his Heavenly Father as he spent time in His creation.

This insight into the personal life of Pastor Maltbie Davenport Babcock helps us understand the inspiration behind today's hymn, "This Is My Father's World". (SDA Hymnal #92) Let's take some time to explore our Father's world in this fifth sermon in our series on Hymns for Him.

This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears,
All nature sings and 'round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world; I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; His hand the wonders wrought.

Romans 1:20—We see in God's creation evidence of His existence. The beauty, detail, and design of the trees, the order and vastness of the starry skies, and the balance and cycle of the seas make us recognize that such great design must have a designer.

Acts 14:17—Nature not only speaks to the existence of God; it shows His character. In nature we see God's:

- Love for creation
- Attention to detail
- Value of variety
- Awesome power
- Order and design
- Laws that bring harmony

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise;
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world; He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass; He speaks to me everywhere.

Matthew 6:26, 28-30—How do birds, morning light, and lilies "declare their Maker's praise"? By being the way that God created them to be! They don't try to change the circumstances in which God has placed them, they just show God's beauty anywhere they are.

1 Peter 3:3, 4—When an issue of excessive adornment arose for Heather, her dad would emphasize that the beauty God had given her was perfect in itself by saying, "Try going out to Mom's lily patch in the backyard, pick one, and see if you can make it any more beautiful than it is by painting on it." God doesn't forbid all adornment, but like the lilies, we should "declare our Maker's praise" through our inner, God-given beauty rather than by what we put on the outside.

"In the rustling grass I hear Him pass; He speaks to me everywhere."

"The whole natural world is designed to be an interpreter of the things of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home, nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. To their attentive ears it was vocal with the voice of wisdom. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart, for they communed with God in His created works."—Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 45

This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world; why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad.

Creation is a living illustration of God's ability to overcome evil. A couple of months after the *Big Rock Fire* that took our house in 2006, we took a friend to see the destruction caused by the fire, but instead of total devastation, we saw new life springing up from its charred surroundings. Bright green sprigs of grass, baby tree shoots pushing their way toward the sky, spoke to us of the fact that God overrules the wrong that "seems oft so strong" in our personal lives as well as in nature. (See pictures below)



By Ken Fisbeck



By Steve Severance

Next Steps:

1. Take time after church this Sabbath with God in nature.
2. Look for object lessons in nature that tell of God's character.