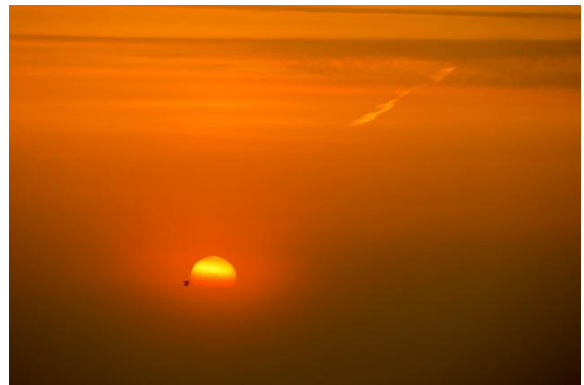


Since I was in my twenties, one of my favorite places to go is a little cabin my Aunt Mary owns on the shores of Lake Huron just north of Port Sanilac. There are no retail stores, no restaurants, no entertainment complexes, and no nightlife. Other than cabins along the water and the occasional barges making their way north to the locks at Sault Ste. Marie or south to the city of Detroit, there is very little sign of mankind. But it is a place where God's natural creation is gloriously displayed.

This past weekend I had an opportunity to head to the cabin for a short retreat, hoping to both take in the beauty of God's creation and to spend some dedicated time studying the book of Romans. I was particularly excited to go this time of year in order to walk the beaches and see the fall color pallet painted among the trees, all before the cold sets in.

Little did I know that the first two days would be rainy and gloomy. There was neither a beautiful sunrise in the morning nor the typical myriad of stars lighting up the night. The colors of the leaves hadn't popped yet and the rain didn't allow for outdoor adventuring with the camera (a favorite hobby that I rarely get to do these days). Adding to the gloom, I had a pretty bad headache that I just couldn't shake, making the study of Romans difficult. I would like to tell you that I was praising God for the rain, the lack of color and the headache, but that would be a lie. I was a bit down in the dumps.

Well, God in his kindness got my eyes back on track in a very picturesque way. On the morning of the third day, I woke before sunrise and could see the light of dawn breaking on the eastern horizon of Lake Huron. My headache was gone so I didn't stay in bed. I wanted to go out and capture the sunrise so that I could send a picture to Teren (some of her most treasured moments are spent watching the sunrise with a cup of coffee in hand). As I went to grab the camera, I caught a glimpse out of the window opposite the lake and was astonished by what I saw. The moon was bright and clear in the western sky, so clear that you could make out some of the depressions and heights on its brilliant surface (made even clearer through the camera lens). I



remembered hearing something on the drive-

up about it being a harvest moon, aptly named because farmers could extend their harvest under its light. Additionally, there was a gorgeous fog draped across the field, the kind that is so often recreated in paintings, but frequently illusive to cameras.

I do not know how to describe it other than that God was just showing off!

So with camera now in hand, I attempted to capture a bit of the glory of it all. Whatever glimpse of beauty you see in the pictures included here was multiplied tenfold in person.

I couldn't help but be reminded of David's words in Psalm 19:1-2,



**The Heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.**

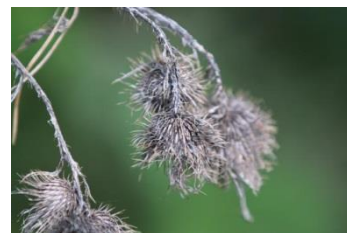
Both day and night were declaring His glory in front of me *at the same time!* The natural imagery could not have spoken more clearly.

“...what can be known about God is plain to them [mankind], because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Rom 1:19-21)

Yet again without excuse, God mercifully changed my posture. I was awestruck by his divinity as his power both enlightened and enveloped the insignificant manmade cottage I had just exited from. In that moment it was so easy to glory in God!

This morning stood in stark contrast to the prior two days. My praise of God was fleeting then. I had largely forgotten to honor Him when things were not progressing as I had planned. I had failed to see his beauty because of the fog that had crept into my heart. I had forgotten that the rain brings the blossom and the cold nights bring the color to the leaves. I had forgotten that the headache brings a reminder that my body is broken and that even though Motrin or sleep may temporarily bring relief, my current body will never be more than a shadow of the heavenly body that awaits, unstained by the taint of sin.

I was compelled to yet again bow the knee and seek forgiveness for my lack of thanks in the prior darker days. Both sun and moon had done their job, shining light on the healthier path of praise so that two remaining days could be brighter. God helped me to more clearly see his beauty on display all around, though perhaps in more subtle ways; in the handful of little blue blossoms scattered throughout the lawn, in the colorless berries bringing nourishment to the birds, in the dying plants scattering their seeds so that life could again spring forth in 2024. With Romans percolating in the back of my mind, all of these little images overlooked in the prior two days were now pointing me to our gracious heavenly Father, the one who sent Jesus to blossom in righteousness among sinful men, bringing nourishment to dead souls, dying and rising again so that we too might receive life. There was so much to be thankful for!



I will be praying that if your days have been a bit dreary, God will also mercifully declare his glory to you in unanticipated ways so that you too can find your way back to a pathway of praise.

Pastor Brad