

Smoky Mountain Reflections, March 2010

The world we live in was shaken and changed by two major catastrophes. First, the world was cursed because of human sin. ***Genesis 3:17... cursed is the ground because of you...*** and about 1700 years later, the world suffered another blow due to human sin. ***Genesis 7:11 ...all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.*** These two events changed God's very good perfect creation into something very different than what existed before sin. Scripture also points out that God's creation continues to suffer due to our sinful nature. ***Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning...*** We can read in Romans 8 that the creation groans and awaits its release from sin's curse with Christ's second coming when it will return to its original created very good glory.

What got me thinking about this the other day was the fact that almost every day I am either amazed or generally awe-struck by some aspect of the beauty, complexity, harmony, purpose, wonder, or just the sheer mass and incomprehensible volume of God's creation. While we can see the effects of the curse in pain, suffering, death, and the unnatural disasters which are all in essence mild aftershocks of a major catastrophe some 4300 years ago. I still find myself puzzled and asking that if this amazing earth is cursed, how much more wonderful can you get than some of the beauty and perfection we are blessed to experience on this cursed planet.

Here are some examples..... First, this body—yes, it shows signs of wear and tear and misuse, but this miraculous self-healing gift from God, that has provided me with 48 years of sights, smells, tastes, feelings, and sounds—many of which give me chills just to recall—is a miraculous collection of trillions of cells all doing exactly what they were designed to do and all carrying the complete instruction manual inside each cell! And this is the cursed model? The one that was restricted to 120 years of life in Genesis 6:3, I wonder how much more amazing the pre-sin everlasting model was?

I can recall sitting on the bank of a lake in Mississippi in my youth as a camp counselor when everyone else was gone, and it was so quiet that a whisper would carry across the quarter mile wide glassy lake. And this is the cursed earth? I wonder how much more amazing the pre-sin everlasting earth was?

I can remember the wondrous year of sights, sounds and sensations that 1983 contained for me. The year started in January by God blessing me with the honor and security of a wonderful wife, making me whole in ways that cannot be fully explained. Then on December the seventeenth, He blessed me with the gift of fatherhood. When I held in my arms that 7-pound 7 ounce girl whom God trusted me to love and parent for the rest of my life, I again experienced unexplainable emotion and awe. And she was the first of three such blessings. Many of you know them as Stephanie, Elisa, and Brandon. And this is a cursed existence? I wonder how much more amazing the post second coming existence will be?

I can recall cutting through endless miles of ocean with unnumbered waves crashing against the bow and connected to that same memory are countless hours of slowly slicing through serene glassy seas. That combined decade of my life spent on the world's oceans also provided me with memories of friendships and camaraderie available in no other vocation, not to mention dozens of at-sea sunsets, sunrises and countless

views of coastlines during entry, departure, and just passing by—all unique vistas of the vast beauty and wonder of God’s creation from the vantage point of His seas. And this is cursed? How amazing must have the pre-sin and pre-flood earth and its seas have been?

I could go on reminiscing about the crashing emerald waves on the white sands of Bellows Beach on the north side of Oahu, where we camped many a day with the Schmidt family and our beloved Kim who has gone to be with the Lord. I could speak of thousands of miles cycled to and from work at Point Loma in sunny southern California enjoying the cool mornings and the bright afternoons. I could speak of the beauty of 300-year-old oak trees draped in Spanish moss in the land of my heritage. The land of alligators, bayous and the New Orleans Saints! (Super Bowl XLIV CHAMPS! In case you did not know). I can speak of thousands of lightning bugs flickering over a field of soybeans in front of my cabin’s porch during the cool dusk of a late northeastern Indiana summer day. And I can speak of the beautiful winter sunset that is outside my window as I write this—slowly the sun again sets in east Tennessee giving a bold silhouette to Chilhowie Mountain. Having visited over 30 countries and lived in over 20 homes I have only experienced a small fraction of a percentage of this vast globe that is much smaller than a microscopic spec in this vast universe. It is so hard to believe this is all cursed!!!! No, I am not blind or immune to all the pain and suffering in this cursed world. However, I can’t help but think that if this is God’s creation in its cursed state, how good it must have been before sin, and how good it will be when He comes again to restore this broken world to its initial very good condition.

Enjoy the beauty of God’s creation in its cursed state this Lenten season, and look forward with me to another great Easter celebration and the completion of God’s perfect and gracious will.

In Christ,
Pastor Portier