

LIFE AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE

SCRIPTURE TEXT: HEBREWS 1:1-4 (ESV)



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Stillness and Glory:

We are a people who practice the taking of the sacrament of the Lord's Table. And we are a people who have lives that are filled with pressure, distraction, discouragement and busyness. Stillness can be so far from our hearts that for some, we cannot remember what stillness is. Glory is a concept we have a notion of but cannot recall the last time we were swept up in it. And yet, when we come to the Lord's table, stillness is required and glory saturates the air surrounding it. So as we prepare to come to this table and consider the glory of Christ as expressed in Hebrews 1, may we also pray that the Lord Jesus would quiet our hearts and reveal His glory to us through this sacrament.

Hebrews 1:1-4

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

A World With Dew Still On It:

As a child, after mornings spent attending the home school his minister/father taught, Norman Maclean, the author of **A River Runs Through It**, recalled, "Every afternoon I was set free, untutored and untouched till supper, to learn on my own the natural side of God's order. And there could be no better place to learn than the Montana of my youth. It was a world with dew still on it—more touched by wonder and possibility than any I have since known."

Recently my wife and I recently visited such a place—the Big Horn Mountain range in Wyoming, just between the Crow Indian Reservation and National Forest, and on the edge of Maclean's Montana. It is a world with dew still on it. Glorious!!! Imagine a canyon colored by aspen and ponderosa pines with walls of stone towering 1,200 feet above you on either side. The canyon was cut wide enough for the Little Big Horn River, teeming with rainbow trout, to surge, cascade and at times, gently meander through the bottom, leaving enough room for a cabin or two scattered on the canyon floor.

We stayed in such a cabin. Down there in the canyon, there were no mosquitoes and no humidity—making it so you could feel a drop in temperature when you stepped out of the sun into the shade. Eagles and sparrows soared high against the canyon walls. From the porch of the cabin, you could hear the river running over the rocks. The river was supplied by the melting snow of the mountains, while the cabin's water came from a natural spring which bubbled up out of a rock well, and which was the sweetest, coolest, most refreshing water these lips had ever tasted. I brought a gallon of it home with me.

The only other people we saw were actual cowboys, who tipped their ten gallon Stetson's to us as they rode past. It was a glorious place—a place only those with an invitation will ever see—a place you must be led to in order to find. It opened up for us a world I wasn't sure existed. The heavens and the earth were declaring the glory of the Lord. I felt so small... so speechless... And yet I was reminded that my heart was created to long for glory—and to revel in it. And revel we did!

Our guide, the man I have always known as Pastor Chuck, or PC (my pastor in college and the man who officiated Lisa's and my wedding), together with his wife and their chocolate lab, Drake, took us on a four mile hike. He led us up one side of the canyon and down the other. We ascended the upper rim of the east canyon, overlooking the river below, and then descended down a grassy meadow of wildflowers to the river's edge. We crossed those icy waters up to our waists, pressing against the currents, and hiked a trail back which followed the river's west bank, with the canyon walls now towering above.

We were fortunate to have Drake and a guide like PC. Drake took point and PC wore a sidearm and knew how to use it. It was an old .22 double action revolver which held nine rounds. He loaded it alternating slugs and rounds of birdshot—slugs for bears and birdshot for rattlesnakes. After all, it was bear and rattlesnake country and to hike without protection was foolish.

It was a wild place, and its wildness made it glorious... and also dangerous. Man had not tamed this place. When we entered that wilderness, we knew that **we** were the imports, guests of honor in a place abundant in glory, and yet bigger than us in every way. We could have stayed in the cabin. They had checkers and monopoly. They had Billy Graham's autobiography and crossword puzzles. It was dangerous out there. Under every rock there could have been a snake. Behind every bush there could have been a bear. In the river, there could have been tricky currents to sweep us away. But that glorious place **begged** one thing of us—Engage! So we did!

We live in a wild world. My concern for each of us is that we increasingly live in a paralyzing fear of what **could** happen to us to the point that we are afraid to engage the glory surrounding us. We want to tame our lives, our world—even our God. But we were made to live in a place that is bigger than us. We were created for glory. Today we come to the Lord's Table—something we do every month! May we never tame this practice! May we never become bored by it! The invitation to the Lord's Table is an invitation to glory—to life as it was meant to be—to consider who Jesus is even now (**Lord**)—and what His broken body and shed blood promises to be forever.

The Lordship of Christ: vs. 1-4

The author of Hebrews introduces his book by offering one of the most concise descriptions of the power and glory of Jesus in the Bible. This is the Jesus we commune with when we come to His table. Like that canyon in Wyoming, His table is a place we cannot find on our own. We need a guide—a host, someone to invite us. The very same Jesus described in Hebrews is the Jesus who invites us now to come to commune with Him together. His invitation is to remember Who He is and what He has done to secure our lives for Glory by surrendering His own. His invitation is to proclaim our union with Him—our guide, our host, our Savior and our God! All that we need, He is! Specifically who is this Jesus?

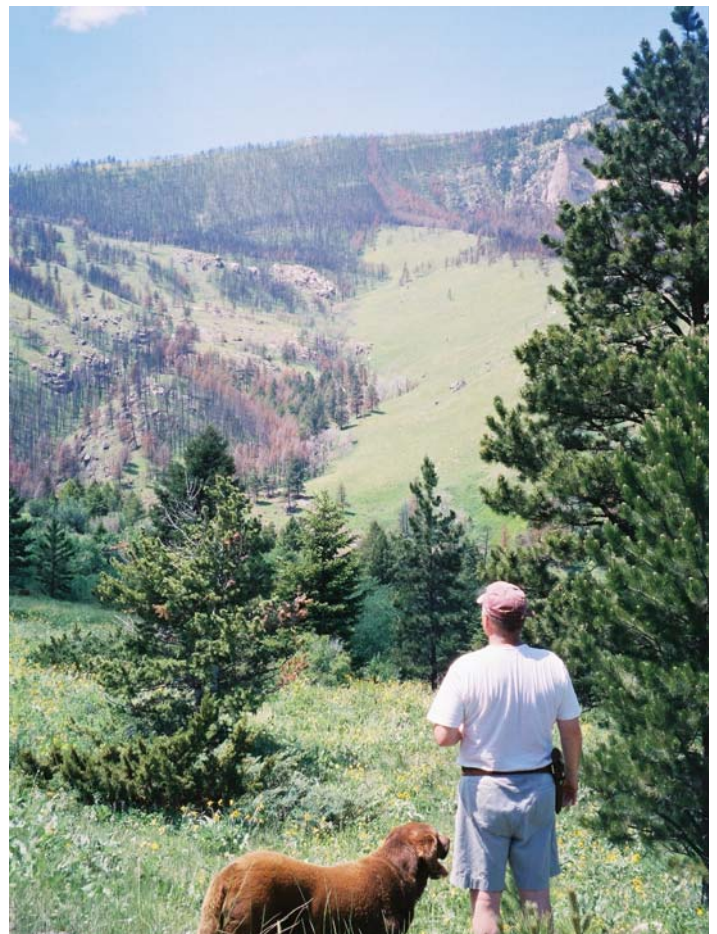
- 1. God's appointed Heir of all things (vs 2):** As God's appointed Heir, Jesus possesses dominion over all that is His Father's—God's. As Heir, it is the right of Christ alone to rule over God's creation. How often have you feared that life was running away out of control? Have you ever feared that your problems were too big even for Christ? Before the sight of God, He rules rightfully and with utmost dignity, as God's Heir of all things. As Heir, **He possess all authority.** And so when you come to this table, you commune with the rightful ruler of Heaven and Earth.
- 2. Creator of the World (vs 2):** We must remember that Jesus Christ has always been one with the Father, and was present at Creation—and in fact participated in it. Have you ever feared that He just cannot accomplish what you need. Its not that He doesn't care, its just that He's not strong enough? As Creator, **He possesses all power.** It is He Who invites us to come to His table.
- 3. The Glory of God and the Imprint of His Nature (vs 3):** Jesus is in no way inferior to His Father. Without Christ, we are hopelessly in the dark, but with Christ, the very light of God lights our way. Have you ever feared that His love is no greater than yours? His love for His people runs deeper than anything you could ever fathom! He has never been your buddy and you have never been on His last nerve. Jesus is too big for both. Jesus is God! As God, **He possesses all glory and majesty to love you perfectly.** It is He Who invites us to come to His table.
- 4. The Upholder of all Things (vs 3):** As the upholder of all things, we can know that right now Jesus is in full control of every inch of His creation—and that every day we live, we do so because our very lives have been sustained by Christ. For some, we have little problem trusting Jesus for our eternal security, but fear the issues we face today escape His eye. Are you sick? Depressed? Lonely? Addicted? Financially broken? As the Upholder of all things, **Jesus possesses all strength for today, as well as hope for tomorrow.** It is He who invites us to come to His table.
- 5. The One Who Purifies us from Sin (vs 3-4):** This truth is the lynchpin that makes all the previous truths so glorious to the believer. By purifying us from our sin by His death, we stand before God clean. He does not simply mask our sin. Nor does He persuade the Father to overlook it. He purifies us from our sin by taking it upon Himself. This is what this table is about. This cup is the cup of His blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. This bread is His Body, broken for us, if our faith is in Him. As He who purifies us from sin, **Jesus gives us possession of His righteousness before God.** It is He who invites us to this table.

The Glory That Awaits:

Venturing from that cabin meant two things—that we would see glorious things and there would be danger. Life this side of Heaven is always that way. It is wild. Mixed in amid the glory is fear. We don't know what lurks around the corner. But we can't stay in the cabin, not when glory beckons us to engage. Yet, as Abraham Kuyper said, "*There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, 'This is mine! This belongs to me!'*" Jesus is the Lord NOW!!!

Consider also the **future** promises contained in this invitation to His table. Jesus, the Heir of all things, the glorious Creator, the exact imprint of God's nature—the One Who upholds the universe by the Word of His power—the One who made purification for our sins and sat down at the right hand of God, showing that the purification which came through the breaking of His body and the shedding of His blood, which we remember with these elements, is perfect and complete forever... This is the One who invites us—with all our fears, imagined and real!!!

And in this sacrament is the promise that my canyon is just a foretaste of the glory that awaits. Not only that, there is another promise—that in the glory that awaits the people of God, no snake will poison us, no bear will maul us, no currents will take us under. God's people are destined for glorious things yet unimagined—all our fears vanished, all our foes vanquished and all our sorrows and fears stilled for eternity. This is the future we await even now as we come today to the table of the One Who is, now and forever, Lord—Jesus Christ.



BEAR AND RATTLESNAKE COUNTRY: PC and Drake overlooking the meadow where we descended to cross the Little Big Horn River.