

# EEN

## Sermon Starter: September 2017

### “Shout It From The Mountain Top – Praise God”

*Theme:* Creation Belongs to God; Testifies to His Majesty; We are called as stewards.

Scripture: Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>*The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;  
<sup>2</sup>for he founded it on the seas  
and established it on the waters.*

Romans 1:18-23 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup>*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

<sup>21</sup>*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*



During the horror of World War II in September 1944, British Bombers devastated Darmstadt, Germany with a new technique known as the firestorm (the same strategy was used later in the more famous destruction of Dresden). As a result, at least 12,000 died and the city destroyed. Out of the rubble, two women, Klara Schlink and Erika Madaus discovered a new and powerful relationship with Jesus.

Amid their anguish, the women felt an extreme need to repent of their lukewarm faith and of Nazi regime’s crimes against the world and especially what would be called the Holocaust. Their efforts led to a ministry of love and reconciliation that transformed into a protestant faith community known as the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary by 1947. The order, although small, grew to include additional communities in the United States, Sweden, Australia, Canada, and eleven other communities outside their German home. Its foundational scripture is Jesus’ last prayer that *“His followers would all be one”* (John 17:21). The Sisterhood is open to all Christians who desire to love, know, and appreciate each other.

The Sisterhood's U.S. community is located near Phoenix, AZ and is probably most famous for its praise of God's handiwork in creation. In 1970, at the request of Mother Schlink- the communities then 66-year-old founder, three bronze plaques were placed at concession areas within Grand Canyon National Park. The markers include:

*All of the Earth worships Thee. They sing praises to Thee. Sing praises to Thy name.”- Psalms 66:4*

*All of the Earth worships Thee. They sing praises to Thee. Sing praises to Thy name.” - Psalms 66:4*



*“Oh Lord, how many-fold are Thy works, in wisdom hast made them all. The Earth is free of Thy riches. - Psalms 104:24*

*Father almighty, wonderful Lord, wondrous Creator, thee ever adored. Wonders of Nature sing praises to You, Wonders of wonders – may praise too.*

Mother Schlenk's goal was simple, “to say thank you to God for His creation.”

The signs have not been free from controversy. In 2003, the plaques were briefly taken down by the Park Service but were quickly returned by an outpouring of prayer and public opinion. In response to their return, the order's then leader Mother Basilea said, “the impossibilities of this commission are great. A way is found to make plaques which are inscribed with a Bible word and a song verse. If God gives you a commission, He takes responsibility that it comes to fulfillment. Today there are hundreds of praise spots in many countries. Each one has its own miracle story. Who is like God!”

She continued:

*I must say, my heart is really grieved to think that any human artist who has created something beautiful receives honor and recognition and praise. But God is often forgotten – yes, nowadays He's even despised and mocked. And there should be praise singers everywhere. You are to be the first ones. But you're far too few. We need many praise singers in all the countries, who will counterbalance the campaign of destruction and of evil in our times.*

*And these praise singers need to be stirred into action. Let them hear the call to put up signs everywhere that will be a challenge to give glory to this almighty God and Maker in the beauty of His creation. And people catching sight of these signs will have to stop and say, 'Why, yes! – that's true. We should give praise to this great God!' then they will start singing. And songs of praise and worship will be heard everywhere.*

Throughout the centuries, the majesty and wonder of God's creation opened the hearts of millions to a relationship with The Creator. Great hymns like “**How Great Thou Art,**” “**America The Beautiful,**” and praise songs such as Chris Tomlin's “**Indescribable,**” all witness the creation testifies to our awesome God.

*For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. –Romans 1:20 (NIV)*

It's difficult to find a Christian who hasn't encountered God wandering through creation. Recognizing ***"This Is Our Father's World"*** as you view a majestic sunset, a mountain peak, or a well cultivated field is more American than apple pie and probably the most common universal experience of Christians.

***[Insert your story of experiencing God in creation or allow someone else to share their testimony]***

Since the beginning, creation has testified to God's reality and ever presence, but we cannot forget that creation isn't ours – it belongs to God as Psalm 24:1 (NIV) states:

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it;*

We are commanded to tend the earth and steward all aspects of this wonderful creation given to us to sustain abundant physical life, enjoy, and even play in. Creation doesn't belong to any one person or group to exploit, plunder, or be used selfishly. It's a trust, given by God, for the benefit of humanity and the glory of God.

To keep creation accessible to all and to break the European feudal system, our ancestors accomplished a remarkable thing. Agreements were made to keep lands open to all. In 1802, all the states agreed to cede lands outside the original 13 states to the federal government, creating a vast public domain, lands controlled by the federal government in trust for all people. This is even more remarkable considering Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase the following year.

As the United States expanded, some of the lands held in public trust were given away in service of the public good. Revolutionary and Civil War veterans received land for their service to all. As states were organized, land grants were given for government, schools, colleges. Even industries like railroads were provided lands and in some cases mineral rights for the perceived public benefit.

Our country's forbearers understood the foundational, Biblical principle that creation is a trust given for all and is not subject for private gain or individual benefit – but a gift to be stewarded for all and for all time. That's even more apparent in our majestic national treasurers of National Parks, National Monuments, and other public lands.

Our public lands are essential as they declare God's glory and remind us of our calling as stewards. They make available to everyone what belongs to God. They reflect our highest ideals as a nation: that everyone is welcome because all individuals are created equal, endowed with the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To step into a National Monument or National Park and enjoy the beauty of God's creation is to experience freedom and the richness of life as persons made in the image of God.

One of the best tools our nation has for protecting the beauty of God's creation comes from the Antiquities Act signed by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906. This allows the President to designate already federally owned lands as National Monuments, which provides additional protections. President Teddy Roosevelt did this for the Grand Canyon, which eventually

became a National Park; indeed, nearly half our National Parks were first protected by Presidents of both parties who designated them National Monuments – more than 30 so far.

Our land need protection – just as our Romans passage tells of folks who deny God and create false gods. Many would like to despoil the wonder of God’s creation for their profit and gain – not to promote an abundant life for all – even some of our most majestic places.

God’s creation testifies to who God is. The “awesome wonder” of places like the Grand Canyon remind Christians that all of humanity is called to be good stewards of the bounty upon which life depends, to protect and defend the beauty and purity of the land and water, to have clean skies and fresh air for our children to enjoy. The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary wanted to insure all people had an opportunity to recognize God as creation has testified and opportunity to praise God for the inspiration, wonder, and majesty that we experience in all creation.

We are without excuse! Creation testifies and provides witnesses to Jesus Christ who created all things in heaven and on earth. Let defend Jesus’ creation so all people can continue to:

*Shout it from the Mountaintop – Praise God!*