

## **“Filled With Good Things”**

Rev. Dr. Peter Bynum

Earth Care Sunday

April 26, 2026

*<sup>1</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty . . . <sup>5</sup> He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. . . . <sup>10</sup> You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; <sup>11</sup> they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. <sup>12</sup> Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. <sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work. <sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth <sup>15</sup> and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart. <sup>16</sup> The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. <sup>17</sup> In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees. <sup>18</sup> The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers. . . .*

*<sup>24</sup> O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. <sup>25</sup> Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable, living things both small and great. <sup>26</sup> There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it. <sup>27</sup> These all look to you, to give them their food in due season. <sup>28</sup> When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. . . .*

*<sup>34</sup> I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. <sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. (Psalm 104: 1, 10-18, 24-28, 33-34)*

A few weeks ago Stephanie and I went down to Manhattan to catch Daniel Radcliffe in the Broadway show “Every Brilliant Thing.” The one-man show follows a person’s lifelong practice of keeping a list of all the good, amazing, or as the British are fond of saying, “brilliant” things about life: things like ice cream on a hot summer day... water balloon fights... dancing at a wedding. In the face of mortal struggles and disappointments, the list represents a commitment to focus on blessings: the gifts, pleasures, and beauties of life. It is a wonderfully uplifting show.

That same spirit comes to life in this ancient verse we read today. It feels as if the psalmist has set out to write their own list of brilliant things, a list that is specifically focused on the manifold majesties of God’s creation. It is brilliant, the psalmist sings, how our Earth provides for every living thing. The list includes springs that “gush forth,” by which God gives “drink to every beast of the field.” Trees are also brilliant – trees that give shelter to the “birds of the heavens” and give them a stage where they can “sing among the branches.” God gives human beings all kinds of plants to seed, cultivate, and harvest, not only providing us with food but also a vocation – honest, honorable work that gives us purpose and gladdens our hearts. The oil we get from olives and other plants makes our food taste better and soothes dry, cracking skin. So many gifts and blessings, so many things that the world God created gives to us and provides for us – the psalmist is deeply struck with wonder and awe: “O Lord! how manifold are thy works! ... I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God [as long as I have breath, as long as I am alive.”



I don't want to give any spoilers about the Daniel Radcliffe show, but I can say that, as you might expect, there are some things in the protagonist's life that contend against his desire to stay positive. Things happen that cause him grief and work to pull his spirit away from light and health and happiness. The list of Psalm 104 is no different. In the life of the psalmist, there are threats, there is wickedness, there are people who seem to contend against the good. The intent of the psalm is not to deny the difficulties of life – it simply seeks to keep us focused on the light despite the darkness... to keep reminding us of the many ways that God has created the world to give us sustenance, protection, inspiration, and beauty.

Unfortunately, it is easy for us to lose sight of these blessings. One of the real tragedies of modern life is that we, as a people and a society, are becoming more and more separated from the earth. In the beginning, we lived close to the soil. Human beings hunted for game and gathered plants and berries for food. We hewed beams from trees and formed bricks from the mud to construct shelter against the elements. Our lives changed with the seasons. But over time our lives have become less and less connected to these natural realities. As the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon once preached, "We who are condemned to live in this great wilderness of brick are very likely to forget the seasons altogether .... Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, are God's four evangelists whom He sends into this world to teach those who are willing to be taught."<sup>1</sup> He preached that sermon in 1867. Imagine how much farther we have drifted away from our rooting in God's earth in the years since.

No one knows the answer to this question better than Dr. Miles Richardson, who is the "Professor of Human Factors and Nature Connectedness" at the University of Derby in England. That is his actual title, and based on his research, we need a lot more scientists with his expertise, because all kinds of human factors are weakening our connections to nature. Dr. Richardson describes our plight as "an extinction of experience." With each passing generation, humanity is drifting farther and farther away from the wonders of nature. Parents are no longer instilling in their children a healthy appreciation for the fragile wonders of the Earth. This lack of connection, Richardson argues, is a root cause of the current environmental crisis.<sup>2</sup> Both the health of humanity and the health of the natural world, he says, are dependent upon our ability and willingness to reverse this trend, to restore our connection to the physical world, and to educate ourselves and others about the many ways that we continue to depend upon the sustenance, shelter, and inspiration that we receive from the planet that is our home.

In other words, we have to get back to our roots. Literally, back to the soil of our roots. And, for us here in the United States, a great place to start is with the native people who were here first. For thousands of years, Native American tribes have understood their relationship with the land to be a deeply sacred thing. The blessings of the Earth – blessings of food, clothing, shelter, and medicine -- were considered to be sacred gifts. But those sacred gifts came with a sacred responsibility. The land was never seen as a commodity to be exploited or grabbed for selfish gain. It was, instead, a living entity in its own right – something to be treated with respect, reciprocity, and reverence.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, "In the Hay Field," [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Barkham, "Human connection to nature has declined 60% in 200 years, study finds," [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com), Aug. 9 2025.

The Lakota Sioux of the Great Plains describe this sacred bond with the phrase *Mitákuye Oyás'iy* (*metah-kooye oh-yaseen*), which means “All My Relations.” This idea is the very fabric of Lakota society. It is who they are, not just as individuals, but as a community, as a kinship group. And the Earth – and all life on Earth -- is considered part of the family. As one Lakota school teacher says, *Mitákuye Oyás'iy* “means that we’re good to each other, we look out for each other, and we take care of each other. And every day we remind [our children] of that. But it isn’t just us. It is everything. We take care of the Earth, we take care of the plants, the animals, and all things we have because they come from the Earth.”<sup>3</sup>

This philosophy begins with a deep gratitude – an awareness that so much of who we are is dependent upon the planet God gave to us, the planet God created as our home. It is exactly the same philosophy that moved an ancient Hebrew poet to pen a melodic ode to creation. It is the same sense of awe and wonder that we cannot help but feel when we think about all that the Earth gives to us... and when we realize that we share this in common with all life on the planet: the plants rooted in the earth, the birds of the air and the beasts of the field... from the smallest creepy crawly thing in the soil to the massive creatures that roam the deep. God created us all. God sustains us all. God cares for us all. We are all related. And the more we seek harmony with those relations... the more we protect, preserve, and share what this planet gives us... the closer we will be to the kind of world God intended in the beginning.

God’s creation provides us countless blessings and fills us with so many good things. What is on your list? As you think of this amazing world God has created, what beautiful, brilliant things are you thankful for? What brings you joy? What fills you with awe and wonder, and prompts you to join your voice to the those who, through the ages, have gazed upon the heavens and the earth and proclaimed “*O Lord! how manifold are thy works! ... I will sing to the Lord as long as I live*”?

*Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> “Lakota Kinship System: Mitákuye Oyás'iy,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVpNpn5Cvx0>.