

Nature and Nature's God

I love the forest. I grew up hunting, hiking and camping. In my mid teen years I would camp with other teens for days, and "live off the land" as we imagined ourselves modern versions of Daniel Boone, eating rabbits, bull frogs, and fish. I find the forest a place of solitude and reflection, rest and rejuvenation. *But I've never found my soul there!*

Since the hippie movement of the 1960s, many Americans have looked to nature rather than nature's God for everything from folly to philosophy. In reality, when humans supplant the true God with physical nature, they are merely rejecting the Creator of nature and allowing their own desires to become their personal god. In Romans 1:22-25, Paul warned true followers of Jesus about this very thing (they worshipped created things rather than the Creator). Likewise, the founding fathers of our country would refer to nature and Nature's God.

I don't know how many times I have heard some say (Christian or not), "I can be closer to God camping on a mountain top than I can in church." That comment reveals a deep, but often unrecognized reality within that person's mind:

My religion is one of personal emotions and enjoyment of pleasing self, rather than one of seeking to please the almighty God who created me and gave His Son to die on the cross to redeem me from my own sin.

Every true Christian should desire to show his or her love for God *in the way God, Himself, has given us in scripture, "If you love Me you will keep my commandments,"* - John 14:15. It is quite easy, even for faithful Christians, to supplant God's will with their own *version* of His will, without recognizing it. The peace of the woods (which is very real) can be easily mistaken for the *"peace that passes understanding,"* - Philippians 4:7. John Muir's famous quote reflects that mistake:

"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul." – John Muir

Muir was a great naturalist and I enjoy reading his work. But scripture has taught me to recognize the difference between the allure of simple, emotional peace and the deep, true peace that comes from knowing and pleasing Him. Let us all imbibe deeply of this wonderful natural world that our loving Father has created for our enjoyment and sustenance, *while remembering who He is and His loving call to be closer to him than anything in this world.*

Perhaps our mantra would better read, *"Into His worship I go, to lose my anxiety and find my soul."*

Ray Wallace