September Weekly Reflections

God in the Earth – Psalm 46:1-3

God is our refuge and strength,

a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,

and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;

though its waters rage and foam,

and though the mountains tremble with its tumult

Psalm 46 inspired Martin Luther’s famous “A Might Fortress.” He was so inspired by the vivid imagery of God’s great power that he wrote the hymn that is has been sung throughout the centuries. Both Psalm 46 and “A Might Fortress” remind us that God is bigger than we can even imagine. God’s power is bigger than the mountains and the seas. God’s presence is so encompassing that it contains the earth itself.

This Psalm also reminds us that earth itself is formed by God and displays for us God’s enormous power. The mountains that reach up to the skies, the wide open plains, the long stretches of beach all serve to remind us of how miniscule we are in comparison with the vastness of the world, the vastness of God. God is as solid and unfailing as the rock beneath our feet.

Reflection questions:

* What landscape makes you feel most connected to God? Why do you think that is?
* What does it mean to you that God is your refuge when times are uncertain? How does that change the way you live?

God in the Wind – Genesis 1:1-5 and Genesis 2:7

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

then the Lord GOD formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

One of the first acts that God does in both creation stories of Genesis is to use wind or breath. There is the wind of God that sweeps over the waters and the breath of God breathed into the first human being. Wind is something that in the hands of God brings life. It is a joyful and creative spirit and in fact when we read these two stories we sometimes replace the words “wind” and “breath” with Spirit. These stories teach us that God’s Spirit is present in the wind and the air we breathe.

I have always felt like the Spirit of God is present in the wind. When a thunderstorm comes in, I joyfully open all of my windows because I know that the strong wind of a fresh storm will sweep through my house. There is something refreshing and life-giving about that wind. Even my cats wake up and run around when they feel that fresh air. It is like God’s Spirit comes to breathe new life into my home.

* When have you experienced wind or breath as a joyful thing?
* Do you ever feel the Spirit of God within you when you take a deep breath of fresh air? When?
* Are there parts of your life where you need to open the windows and invite the wind of God to sweep in and refresh you? To bring some new life?

God in the Fire – Exodus 3:1-10

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." 4When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

“Moses said, ‘I must turn aside and look at this great sight…’” The fire of the burning bush is so awe-inspiring that Moses stops everything he is doing to look at it!

* Have you ever been so awe-inspired by a part of God’s creation that you just had to stop and look at the great sight? When?
* Whether it is the fire of the burning bush, the fire of candles lighting on Christmas Eve, or the fire of a good campfire there is something mesmerizing and inspiring about fire. Why do you think fire mesmerizes and inspires?

Through the burning bush God calls Moses to liberate God’s people from enslavement. Through fire God calls Moses to a great act of justice and love. One of my favorite hymns is the Canticle of the Turning. In it, the singer (Mary, the mother of Jesus) says, “let the fires of your justice burn.” For many people, God’s call to justice, liberation, and love feels like a fire burning in their hearts.

* How might God be stirring up a fire in your heart to bring God’s loving justice and liberation in this world?

God in the Water – Psalm 104:10-17

If you’re able, find a quiet place outdoors near some water to do this reflection. If that is not an option for you, set a bowl of water in a place where everyone in the family can see it and perhaps even touch it!

10You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
 they flow between the hills,  
 11giving drink to every wild animal;  
 the wild asses quench their thirst.  
 12By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;  
 they sing among the branches.  
 13From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
 the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.  
 14You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,  
 and plants for people to use,  
 to bring forth food from the earth,  
 15and wine to gladden the human heart,  
 oil to make the face shine,  
 and bread to strengthen the human heart.  
 16The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly,  
 the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.  
 17In them the birds build their nests;  
 the stork has its home in the fir trees.

Every single created thing needs water. Water is an important part of our lives of faith as well. In water, we were baptized and made children of God. In the small catechism, when Luther writes about baptism he says, “How can water do such great things?” and then he continues, “Clearly the water does not do it, but the word of God, which is with and alongside the water.” God continually uses perfectly ordinary and everyday things to do God’s creating work, both in creation and in our lives. This Psalm describes how God provides water in creation so that all living things can grow and thrive. The constant flow of one river carved out (and keeps carving out) the Grand Canyon. At our baptisms, God’s word combined with water makes us new each and every day.

* What is your favorite water-filled place? (This could be somewhere big, like the Atlantic Ocean, or somewhere small, like the unnamed pond in your backyard, or anywhere in between!) Why do you love it? Is it calm, tranquil, and peaceful? Or fast-flowing, strong, or choppy? How does your favorite body of water remind you of God?
* Try to name every way you and your family have used water this week. Even the most ordinary use of water reminds us of our baptisms and God’s presence with us. Try giving thanks to God for water every time you and your family use it for the rest of this week.
* God is at work in water, creating, saving, growing, and healing. How can we be better stewards of water in our daily lives?