

## **About the sloth**

Do you ever take a long look at what you see around you – I am talking of nature. Many people are still fascinated by the wonder of nature.

There is always something new to see.

The other day I was lost in the wonder and awe again of the three toed sloth. I had not realised what a remarkable creature it was. I was sitting watching a Wildlife Whodunnit on BBC1 and in the investigation they referred to this bizarre creature with its long shaggy hair. At what was said my jaw literally dropped open with amazement.

In the rainy season a sloth lets itself go mouldy. Each hair is infused with up to 4 species of algae. In the wet season these algae are green in the dry season they turn brown. The sloths fur is home to mites, ticks, beetles and moths it's a veritable ecosystem. As many as 120 moths live on a single sloth which they don't seem to mind. This shaggy mat is used to the sloths advantage as a defensive mechanism.

As the Psalms say "...to him who alone does great wonders his love endures forever..." His love and grace and mercy can be seen in evidence in this creature. He (that is God) has created it to have a greater chance of living and surviving in such adverse conditions.

Should we also not cease to wonder at how he takes care of us when we trust in him, and follow him

## **Wonder of design**

The wild things that we see around us never cease to amaze me. How there is so much variety. Even within species of birds we see in this country – for example we look at Finches. Taking some of the finches that some of us know such as the Greenfinch, the chaffinch, the bullfinch, although they are in the same family they exhibit many differences. The most obvious being the difference in coloration of the plumage. The Greenfinch is like its name demonstrates – green but it's not just one green it's made up of varying shades of green moving into more greyer tones. It also has yellow patches on it's wings. If you look closely at its bill you can see that it's quite chunky which helps it open seeds and other hard foods.

Compare it to the bullfinch which is dark pink especially on the male with a black cap. The bill is slightly chunkier as it has a slightly different diet to the greenfinch. The male chaffinch is different again.

All remarkable in their own way which points to it being designed. Sometimes we may wonder why a bird or an animal does something a certain way. We as human beings still don't know all the answers to these questions of what we see around us, but we need to be humble enough to admit that and that we may never know. But we can be certain of the person who made them and look in the Bible to see what he has

to say through different people. Are we willing and open enough to see what he has done.

### **About worry**

Today I want to turn and have a short look at worry. It's something we all do from time to time to a greater or lesser degree and it does eat away at our peace as human beings. It has physical side effects on some of us creating hair loss and weight loss. We do laugh at ourselves from time to time about worry and we look back and say of the situation we were worrying about

*“why did I waste so much time worrying about that as in the present circumstances it seems so immaterial!”*

This is one of the things that Jesus talked about in the New Testament part of the Bible. He talks about worry and brings in nature to aid our thinking. Sparrows or birds are the subject of his talk. We see them around somewhat less than we used to which is a shame as they do remind us of Jesus' words. His words are practical as I have known from my own experience and I know of other people who can say the same too.

There are a lot of things in this world that we have especially in the west which we need to ask ourselves do we really need? Here where Jesus talks about worry he is referring to the worry we have over the simple things of life – the basics such as food, drink and clothes. Do we take on far too much too ourselves and burden ourselves unnecessarily? I know I do from time to time but Jesus doesn't want us to be this way as he knows of our needs before we ask him.

### **Principles**

Do you wonder sometimes where your pet cat or dog went when it died? For some people I know this is still a big question. We are meant to look after that which we have responsibility for – the animals are still important but sometimes we place a higher honour on them these days than we do human life. Do we really respect human life as much? If you look at the way we drive our cars sometimes you would think that we didn't. Take indicating on our roads for instance. Have people become so wrapped up in their own little worlds they forget about the people behind them who may need to know where they are going? Do we think we are better than the law that we disobey it and cause harm to others? Road laws are just as valid and important as any other laws they are meant for our own good.

This is only a small example of the way that we have become in our world. We look around us and we all have comments to make on what we see – especially what we don't like in what we see. How much more do you think God feels about the world that he made. Some of us like to blame him for the mess that we are in but we are all responsible for our own actions. God hasn't left us alone to try and muddle through but he has set principles in place for us to keep us from annihilating ourselves in our ignorance and selfishness – he knows what's best for us.

You can find out about these principles and how to live by reading and studying the Bible – as someone coined it Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. There are plenty of examples in the Bible about people like us who messed up but how God worked through them. We often learn best by seeing other people's lives.

## About Rainbows

Do you still get excited about seeing a rainbow? It's something we may not get so excited about now that we are older because science has explained it away but I think there is still wonder at seeing a rainbow.

I was reminded of something by looking at one recently. My wife and I were coming home along the M40 motorway and it was a bit showery. In the distance there were some rather large black clouds. But most of all there was this rainbow which lingered on the horizon in front of us. It was a full rainbow with quite a deep curve and we saw it for half an hour or so but however closer we approached it, was still there and even when we went round a rather large bend in the road it was still there and after travelling around 20 miles it was still there.

The thought that occurred to me whilst looking at this rainbow were the words from the Bible in the last book: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him...” Probably not everyone in the world could see the rainbow we saw that day, but there were a good number of cars travelling along the road into the general direction of the rainbow and of course there were those going in the opposite direction also. But from whatever angle we seemed to come at approaching the rainbow, we could still see it and not get away from it being there (in our line of vision).

To Jesus it won't be a problem for every eye to see him, just like lots of people on the M40 and surrounding countryside could see that rainbow so we all in the world see him when he comes again – the rainbow in this instance is only a small example of what that entails.

Of course the rainbow reminds us of something else that is God's promise to the world to not flood the earth again. I'm sure that some people don't believe the worldwide flood happened – I've read of some! But we can look at the rainbow and be reminded that God keeps his promises.

## Death and Decay

This time of year during the Autumn I sometimes think about death and decay which this season brings. It's part of life. As an amateur naturalist I notice the natural order around me and it speaks of another order. In this present age it is necessary that death and decay are at work in the natural order as death gives birth to life. We see that in vegetation when it is rotting down it is often followed by fungal growth. As Phillips old paraphrase of the New Testament states. “*It is plain to anyone with eyes to see that at the present time all created life groans in a sort of universal travail*” So as we look at the earth around us we can be reminded that there will come a time we will have new bodies if our hope is in Jesus Christ.

## **Growth**

Looking at trees, flowers children and young animals we realise that growth is an everyday part of life.

It can be very exciting as a young child when planting your first seeds, commonly watercress – and watching them grow. Or on our first discovery of a chrysalis. As youngsters there may be the thought let's dig out the seedling or take apart the chrysalis to see how it is doing. That urge may come with planting young trees as well.

As we grow we realise that these experiments have a detrimental affect on their subjects. The same goes for us in our spiritual lives. Too much self examination of can and does stunt our growth. Instead we should be like trees. Trees don't think how am I doing let's take a look. But when troubles comes such as the wind, they hold tight to their foundations. We have a good foundation if our lives are built on Christ.

## **Creation generally**

When was the last time you looked at a plant or an animal in close detail? When I was young the wonder and amazement I had as I looked down a microscope or crawled on the floor to look at an insect was memorable. Even now nature still causes me 'wow!'. There are still things out there, which delight and stagger as we take time to look. It does put me in mind of our great creator God. His creation speaks of his glory, how he has managed every detail. Think how life interacts with other life in this wonderful network of nature.

He is not only involved in the bigger picture but also in the detail of our lives. There is more to life than just chance. It doesn't just happen it is finely tuned. As the Message version of the Bible says "*What's the price of a pet canary? Some lose change right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail even numbering the hairs on your head!*"

## **Eagles**

Not many of us have seen eagles but there is a certain excitement and thrill about it when we do. A majestic bird with an air of mystery and majesty about it.

Legend has it that the eagle when it has given birth to young and they have grown (usually it takes about two years for an eagle to reach full maturity). That the parent birds carry aloft their young to get them to experience flight whether this has been observed or not I am not sure.

It is not the only bird which has been known to carry its young. It is a fact that the great crested grebe and some other water birds carry their young when they float upon the water.

This puts me in mind of our great Father God who when we are vulnerable carries us and as the Message version of the Bible says "*Those who wait upon God get fresh strength. They spread their wings and soar like eagles, they run and don't get tired,*

*they walk and don't lag behind"* He enable us when we are tired. God spoke to the apostle Paul about this issue as he had a specific weakness, we also can take this to heart. *My Grace is enough, it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I (Paul) heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness.*