

Angela Pound

Psalms of the Summer / Psalm 19

Brandon Lake is one of my favourite current Christian singers. Some of his songs that we've sung in church are Praise, Graves into Gardens, Gratitude, and Rattle which the youth just introduced at their Sunday School closing. He's written a recent one called Hard Fought Hallelujah. His solo version came out last November. The theme of the song is hard-fought praise. That it's not about easy, joyful worship but praise born out of struggle and vulnerability—lifting your voice when it hurts. There are lyrics such as “I don't always feel it...but that's when I need it the most...’Til my soul catches up with my song...faith isn't proven like gold 'Til it's been through the fire...”

The refrain reads

“I'll bring my hard-fought, heartfelt
Been-through-hell hallelujah
And I'll bring my storm-tossed, torn-sail
Story-to-tell hallelujah
'Cause God, You've been patient
God, You've been gracious

Faithful, whatever I'm feeling or facing
So I'll bring my hard-fought, heartfelt, it-is-well hallelujah”

It drives home the idea of praise after battling pain and doubt. A song about **resilience and surrender**, acknowledging life's storms and choosing to worship despite them, offering hope and empowerment during our darkest times. In its first month it had over 7 million streams in the US alone. As Brandon Lake says about the song, “I wanted to give my fans a taste of something special... about the battles we face, the grit throughout the fight for faith and the praise that comes after.”

There is a guy by the name of Jason DeFord born in 1984, baptized at the age of 14, then life took a hard turn for Jason in his teens. Arrested at **16** for aggravated assault, he drifted in and out of jail for a decade—heroin, crack, probation violations, you name it. In **2008**, while in jail, he learned he'd become a father, which led to a deeper purpose in life. That news sparked a profound shift in his life—he earned a GED, committed to music, and resolved not to return behind bars. Upon release at **25**, he sold mixtapes from his car and amassed over a billion YouTube views before signing a label. He renewed his faith at the age of 39 after his daughter's baptism and found authenticity in church again. His 2020 album “**Save Me**” was raw, unfiltered, and gave a platform to his journey through addiction. He is an unapologetically honest

believer, living faith out loud—through music, vulnerability, and tangible support for others. Brandon Lake teamed up with this guy, Jason DeFord, who is now known by the name Jelly Roll for a duet version of the song Hard Found Hallelujah. It came out this past February. It added a *gritty, honest edge*—Jelly Roll was someone who “found a safe place in God,” sharing real-life redemption after years of battling addiction and legal issues. Brandon Lake chose him intentionally, recognizing their shared journey through brokenness and faith.

All this to say, it was while Jelly Roll was performing "Hard Fought Hallelujah" during an outdoor concert in Philadelphia this past May that he paused mid-song as a vibrant double rainbow unfolded overhead. Jelly Roll directed the crowd's attention skyward, exclaiming with conviction, “You can't tell me God ain't here!” Jelly Roll FaceTimed Brandon Lake, excitedly proclaiming the sight and its powerful timing.

Today is our second Psalm of the Summer. As mentioned last week, historically, the Psalms were read daily and the entire psalter - all 150 Psalms were prayed regularly. As Webster writes, “The Psalms are the ‘magnetic center’ not only of the Wisdom Books but of the entire canon, the Bible. The Psalms celebrate creation, the exodus, and the tabernacle and priesthood. The prophetic message of the coming of the Messiah is contained in the Psalms, as is his

suffering, ascension, and judgment of evil. The Psalms echo every part of salvation history, and their inestimable value does not stop there.” Last week we looked at Psalm 8, to do with creation, and how God created us as image-bearers of God, every single one of us, remembering this before we interact with others, taking care of God’s creation. Creation, the beginning of God’s story, and celebrating the majesty of God’s creation and the dignity He gives to humanity. Today, we move to Psalm 19. God’s revelation through Creation and His Word.

The group of Psalms 15-24 are known about their access to the temple. The outer frames Psalms 15 and 24 ask the same basic question: Who has access to the temple of Yahweh, the answer is those who are righteous in keeping with Psalm 1. The next frame Psalm 16 and 23 express trust in Yahweh, both concluding on a note of joy for being in Yahweh’s presence. Continuing inward Psalm 17 and 22 are then pleas for deliverance, again expressing trust in Yahweh. The inner frame, Psalms 18 and 20-21 express prayer and praise for the king’s deliverance from his enemies (picking up on Psalm 2). Psalm 19 is the centerpiece in this group,, the Psalm for today. It glories in creation (similar to Psalm 8 that we looked at last week), and the law (found in Psalm 1). It is also interesting that the outer frames Psalm 15 and 24 make reference to God’s holy mountain or hill with the centrepiece of Psalm 19

being the summit, the king of the hill, in other words.

Psalm 19 is broken into three parts. The first 6 verses focus on creation. As it says in verses 1-6 “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.” These verses echo God’s **first spoken covenant with all creation, found in Genesis 9.**

Just like Jelly Roll, when you see or stand under a rainbow do you still think back to what we read about Noah in Genesis 9 when the floodwaters receded and God made a covenant with him? As it says in Genesis 9:12–17 “God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the

waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.””

In these first 6 verses of Psalm 19, David reflects on how creation itself **speaks**—without words—about God’s majesty. Every sunrise, every star, every thunderstorm is a silent sermon. The rainbow is one of the most vivid visual messages in this creation chorus. When God placed the rainbow in the sky after the flood, it wasn’t just beautiful—it spoke. It declared His mercy, His restraint, and His promise to never destroy the earth again by flood. When David looks at the heavens as he speaks Psalm 19, he’s standing under that very promise: **God is not only Creator—He is covenant-keeper.** The consistent rising of the sun is a daily reminder that God’s mercy still holds the world together. It’s a reminder that God, he is gracious, faithful, and that whatever we’re feeling or facing, he’ll take it, he wants our hard-felt hallelujah.

When Psalm 19 says, *“There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out into all the earth...”*, we can picture a rainbow stretching from horizon to horizon—God's voice painted in color, proclaiming to all creation: *“I remember My covenant.”*

One year in particular when I was struggling post concussions, while working, I would bike many days to and from school to clear my head, and it would give me lots of opportunities to talk with God on those bike rides throughout all those struggles. There would be moments that I would feel God sending eagles over head during some of those conversations to tell me that he was with me everywhere I went. These bald eagles would remind me of the verse found in Isaiah 40:31 “but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” God was reminding me that He was in control, that I needed to wait for the Lord as his timing was perfect. Last March right after Cathy’s funeral as I was driving back to school to teach for the rest of the day there were about 10 or so bald eagles sitting on the road and more flying overhead, of which I had never seen such a magnificent display before. I would usually see one or two, but nothing like this. I felt this overarching presence of God saying that everything was going to be okay. Cathy was at peace, soaring on wings like eagles, running and not growing weary, and that those who put their hope in the Lord have access to the same.

Creation connects us to God’s word. The rainbow in the sky reminds us of God’s covenant, bald eagles remind me of strength through the Lord found throughout scripture, the

displays of the Northern Lights remind us of the beauty in creation, his masterpiece, as seen all throughout scripture, and just look to the beginning of this Psalm when it says, Psalm 19:1 “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament (or dome) proclaims his handiwork.” As John Piper said, “We are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem.... There is greater healing for the soul in beholding the splendor than there is in beholding self.” Creation can be a beautiful way to draw us closer to God, to dive deeper into scripture helping us to remember his promises found all throughout His word.

When we reach verses 7-11 in Psalm 19 the Psalter all of a sudden switches to the law or Torah from creation. (Psalm 19:7–11 “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”)

This shift in Psalm 19 turns from what we see in nature to what we hear and live in Scripture—God’s Torah, His

instruction and covenant with His people. Just as the rainbow is a sign of God's covenant with Noah and all living things, the Torah is a living covenant with Israel—guiding them in how to live in faithful relationship with Him.

This is cyclical, with creation pointing us towards the law of the Lord, and the law of the Lord pointing us towards creation. When I read scripture I can't help but visualize all that God has created, which then when living in creation reminds me of the scripture passages. For instance, when I read Psalm 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth" I picture the stillness of creation, sitting in a forest or next to a bubbling brook, observing the small intricacies all around as nature continues while you remain still and breath. God is there. Or again, going back to Isaiah 40:31, when I read that passage it reminds me of bald eagles flying overhead, just as if when I see bald eagles flying overhead, I am reminded of this passage.

The Psalter begins the book of Psalms with "Happy are those" whose "delight is in the law" in Psalm 1:1-2. C.S. Lewis, describing this Jewish positive understanding of biblical law writes, "Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian's delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false short cut has long entangled him in muddy field." And because Psalm 19 so well expresses this delight, Lewis continues, "I take

this to be the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.”

It is in these verses on the law in this Psalm that the Psalter goes from using the general name for God, El, to now the personal name, Yahweh (Lord). I believe speaking to the fact that the law is personal. It's not to be seen as a bunch of a dos and don'ts but God is a personal God, it's a personal covenant. In creation everyone sees God's glory—but it's more general. In His Word, God reveals His character, will, and relationship—and this is deeply personal. Yahweh is the name God revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14–15). It's the name tied to God's covenant with His people. So when the psalm turns to the Torah (God's instruction for His people), it uses the covenant name, highlighting that this is about intimate relationship, not just power or majesty. The universal covenant seen in creation, reminds all of humanity of God's faithfulness to preserve life but the personal covenant given to Abraham and his descendants, calls them to walk in obedience and relationship with Him. These two covenant streams flow together in Jesus Christ, the ultimate fulfillment of both: He is the Son of God through whom all things were made. The offspring of Abraham, through whom all nations are blessed.

The last part of this Psalm is a declaration, a prayer, the result of embodying God's Torah. (Psalm 19:12–14 “But

who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

As William Brown writes, “The connecting thread in all three sections is the power of divine discourse as attested visually in God’s creation, verbally in God’s tora, and existentially in a person’s life.” Last week in Psalm 8 we were reminded that as humans we’re not just mere mortals but God made us “only slightly less than divine.” Psalm 19 reminds us that God made us to live and make God’s glory known in the world and to ascribe glory to him. God from the very beginning revealed Himself in two powerful ways. Through creation—like a rainbow, or a soaring bald eagle, declaring His glory and mercy in every corner of creation and through His Word—a covenant, showing us how to live in relationship with the Creator. Both creation and Scripture spoke then and continue to speak—inviting us daily to see His beauty, trust His promises, and walk in His ways. How could you not sing Hallelujah, hard-fought or not?