

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM NATURE'S WORLD PART XI

Well it is time for us to look at 3 more of God's marvelous creation. The goal is to learn spiritual truths, plainly given us through the lives and ways of the animals that surround us in the world in which we live. I hope you are enjoying reading about them and the lessons I believe they have for us. Today lets start with



The Oyster

They are not very big, but good to eat, so good that in fact the American people consume about 100 million pounds of them each year. Oysters were first served in the US in 1763.

I would like to think about the little oyster and see if there are any spiritual applications we can make as we learn from this part of God's creation.

During a summer an oyster lays about 500 million eggs. The hatchlings from these eggs are called spat and they grow about an inch per year. An oyster can live to be 10 years old and can reproduce billions of times but with so many enemies only about 1 in a million survive.

Inside the shell however is the interesting part. While the outside is rough and crusty, the inside is smooth and covered with a lustrous material called NACRE or mother of pearl. This mother of pearl is what they use to coat any irritants that get into the shell and that is where we get pearls from. It can

take up to 3 years for an oyster to put layer upon layer of this NACRE in order to make a pearl that is of any value.

Now join me as we look at some spiritual applications we can learn from the oyster.

Just as the oyster pretty much stays out of sight we can produce works of beauty by being willing to stay behind the scenes and just keep working.

While we know that the oyster uses what is called Mother of Pearl for the coating on its pearls, we have the Father of Lights who gives us the coating help we need for the spiritual pearls we are making.

James 1:17 says Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.

And since Romans 8:28,29 says that all things work together for good, then nothing bad is ever going to come from our Father of Lights

Then we see from the oyster that it can take years to make something of beauty and the application is for us to be patient in the process the Lord has us under.

James 1:2-4 gives us some encouragement: Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.

Thought: Perhaps the most important trip we can ever take is going the second mile because as someone said, the difficult things take a long time - The impossible take a little longer.

Have you stopped to think that, while you are waiting and working and it seems like it will never end, you may be about ready to display a real godly gem of a pearl - so hang on!!

Finally, we learn that it is irritations that God often uses to build something beautiful. When we run into a distressing situation or person we want the Lord to remove them and get our life back to normal and without pain. But the oyster approaches an irritation in an entirely different way. The oyster simply begins to cover it with something better.

Thought: For us, we can begin to apply the fruit of the spirit and pretty soon that person or situation that was driving us crazy will finally become a thing of beauty through the hands of the Lord. So when we begin to encounter difficulties, let's not forget the lessons we can learn from the oyster and like the oyster let's begin working on a pearl to put on display to show off the wisdom and wonder of the Lord.

Let's not forget the little poem someone wrote that goes like this

The Oyster

There once was an oyster
Whose story I tell,
Who found that some sand
Had got into his shell.

It was only a grain,
but it gave him great pain.
For oysters have feelings
Although they're so plain.

Now, did he berate
the harsh workings of fate
That had brought him
To such a deplorable state?

Did he curse at the government,
Cry for election,
And claim that the sea should
Have given him protection?

'No,' he said to himself

As he lay on a shell,
Since I cannot remove it,
I shall try to improve it.

Now the years have rolled around,
As the years always do,
And he came to his ultimate
Destiny stew.

And the small grain of sand
That had bothered him so
Was a beautiful pearl
All richly aglow.

Now the tale has a moral,
for isn't it grand
What an oyster can do
With a morsel of sand?

What couldn't we do
If we'd only begin
With some of the things
That get under our skin.



The Tortoise

Let me read a short story to introduce this next creature God has for us to try and learn from. Most of us probably know him best from this story by an old writer by the name of Aesop

The Hare was once boasting of his speed before the other animals. "I have never yet been beaten," said he, "when I put forth my full speed. I challenge any one here to race with me." The Tortoise said quietly, "I accept your challenge." "That is a good joke," said the Hare; "I could dance round you all the way." "Keep your boasting till you've beaten," answered the Tortoise. "Shall we race?"

So a course was fixed and a start was made. The Hare darted almost out of sight at once, but soon stopped and, to show his contempt for the Tortoise, lay down to have a nap.

The Tortoise plodded on and plodded on, and when the Hare awoke from his nap, he saw the Tortoise just near the winning-post and could not run up in time to save the race. Then said the Tortoise: "Plodding wins the race."

The tortoise is a turtle that lives only on land and that varies considerably in size. Supposedly, the largest living tortoise is one that lives on an island in the Indian Ocean and weighs 657 pounds.

Tortoises are known for their slowness of movement and for their long life spans. One documented case of longevity involves an adult Indian Ocean Giant Tortoise that, when captured as an adult, was estimated to be fifty years old. It then lived another 152 years in captivity.

Tortoises are almost wholly vegetarian. They eat vegetation such as seedlings, moist and tender leaves, flowers, and cactus; but sometimes they will eat small insects.

The giant Galapagos tortoise has few natural enemies other than man. God created the tortoise with a large, hard, protective shell so that when they are in danger, they can withdraw their tough, scaly head, neck and legs inside.

God created the tortoise to make its own way in life after leaving its egg. Unlike the tortoise, we have a loving heavenly Father who watches over us at all times. He asks only that we trust Him in every circumstance.

In Hebrews 13:5 *He promises us that He will never leave us or forsake us* But from the story and from the tortoise itself I think of a couple other thoughts for us to consider. First

A. From the actual shell God gave the tortoise

He gave each tortoise one especially designed for the tortoise that lives inside it and we need to learn to be comfortable in our own shell or life, that special one God has created just for each of us.

Don't waste your time and life trying to be someone that you were not meant to be. **The bottom line;** Learn to be comfortable in your own shell. Be who God wants you to be instead of trying to be like everyone else thinks you should be

B. From our story about the tortoise that Aesop gave us I think of

Being slow but steady in our walk and work for the Lord
Ecclesiastes 9:11 in the easy read version says it this way: *I also saw other things in this life that were not fair. The fastest runner does not always win the race; the strongest soldier does not always win the battle; wise people don't always get the food; smart people don't always get the wealth; educated people don't always get the praise they deserve. When the time comes, bad things can happen to anyone!*

2. Don't worry about running someone else's race, just be sure you finish your own, and finish strong.

3. Don't become discouraged because things go slow for you just be sure to keep running.

4. Finally don't be proud like the hare but remember these words of the Lord in I Peter 5:5 *You should all have a humble attitude in dealing with each other. "God is against the proud, but he is kind to the humble."*

Well these lessons or reminders should be something we can say thank you to the Lord and to the tortoise he lovingly created to help us learn. May our lives be richer all because of this special animal the Lord gave us here on earth.



Red- tailed Hawk

The red-tailed hawk is a bird of prey, one of three species often known in the United States as the "chicken hawk," though it rarely preys on standard sized chickens. Instead, red-tailed hawks eat small mammals, especially rodents and rabbits which make up about 80% of their diet. They also eat birds, reptiles, fish and insects.

The red-tailed hawk is a fast-flying, migrating bird of prey that belongs to a large family of birds. The family includes ospreys, kites, harriers, Old World vultures, and eagles. The Red-tailed hawk is very intelligent and is one of the easier birds of prey to tame.

Now for some spiritual observations I personally think about from this particular cage at the zoo during our zoology study

The red-tailed hawk commonly employ a special hunting technique. Often, they scan for prey activity from an elevated perch site, or else in the air, swooping down to seize the prey.

To me the **lesson is**, don't spend all your time perched so high or flying so high in your estimation that you look down on others while waiting for a chance to pounce. **Why this warning?**

How about this word from the Lord. James 4:6 *In fact, God treats us with even greater kindness, just as the Scriptures say, "God opposes everyone who is proud, but he is kind to everyone who is humble."*

Robertson says "The proud man or woman has a little altar in their heart where they bow down before themselves and this causes their eyes to look at all others with a silent contempt."

Look out! This sin is subtly deceptive but ever lurking to pounce. How do you view others? As fellow strugglers or are they in your view simply sinners who can't get a grip on life?

God also gave the hawks extremely strong leg muscles. He equipped their feet with four long, sharp, curved talons for capturing and disabling prey.

In thinking about the hawk and its talons for food, to me the lesson is, we need to keep our hooks out of other believers and tend to our own things.

Don't worry about swooping down on other believers with the intent to kill or destroy their reputations, or their ministries

How does God's word address this possibility? Philippians 2:3,4 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Then God designed the bill of any of the birds of prey, like the hawk we are looking at, to be very strong so that it can effectively tear flesh.

The point of the bill is exceptionally sharp; the shearing edges along the sides of the upper bill act as knife blades as they slice off bits of flesh brought by the lower bill.

As I think about this design of the mouth and its purpose, I see the bill is sharp but I also know that closely aligned with the bill is also the tongue.

In the spiritual realm I think more about the tongue the bill. Just as the bill of the hawk is used for ripping flesh the tongue of the believers often rips their prey as they try to feed their own egos.

But what does the scripture say about this? Colossians 4:6 says *Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone.*

Thought: It is better to speak kindly and with grace than just rip into someone just to get your point across

Finally concerning the hawk, the rough scales covering their feet help protect the lower extremities from the bites and scratches of struggling prey.

Ephesians 6:15 gives us some insight here. Putting on the Spiritual Armor, part of which is keeping you feet clad with the gospel of peace

The lesson as I see it is when attacked by those in the church or in life who seek to destroy you, criticize you, discourage you, or whatever it is, keep your feet firmly on the word of God and you like the hawk will be protected from the biting and scratching torment as you go forward doing that you know by faith you are to do.

The bottom line however from the special look at the hawk is we need to be careful that we do not waste our lives preying on each other in the church, the neighborhood, or the family

Instead of PREYING on them PRAY for them