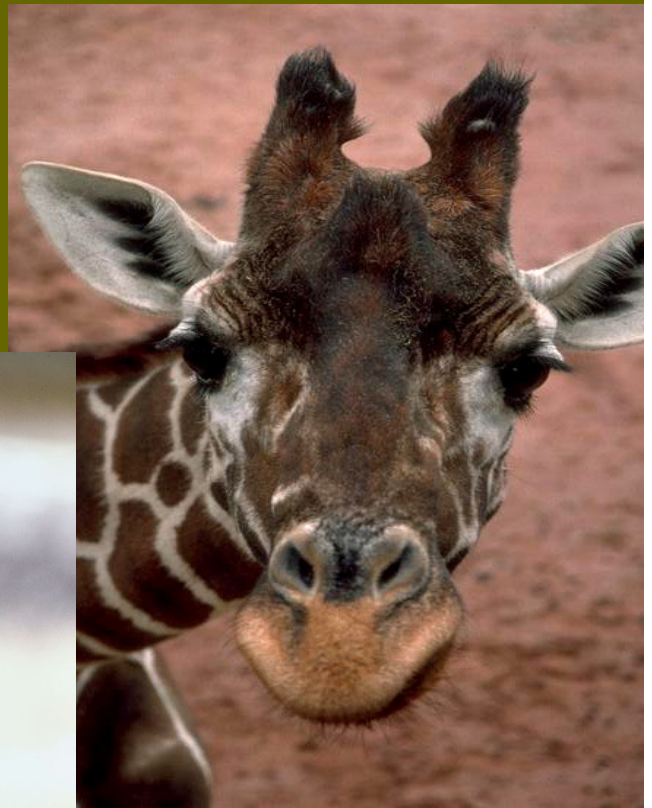


JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Zoo Day



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalm 8
Psalm 104:24

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Give me eyes to see Your glory
and majesty in Your creation.
Help me to praise you whole-
heartedly.
In Jesus' Name,
Amen

OUR BIG SURPRISE

Mrs. Olson, my second-grade teacher, was the undisputed coolest teacher in L.O. Donald elementary school. Wispy-thin with a winning smile, Avis Olson was a joy to watch. I listened to her soothing voice even through addition and subtraction. This was no ordinary feat because her competition was dreamy Gary Chutney who sat in front of me. He wore his navy blue Cub Scout suit on Wednesdays, and I never could resist a man in uniform. Gary greased his flat top with Vitalis pomade and the smell wafted sensuously toward my desk.

But even Gary Chutney could not rival Mrs. Olson's creative antics. On Monday mornings, life-sized cardboard cutouts of the Campbell's soup kids came out of the closet near her desk. Each "kid" held a specific number, and we would add and subtract Campbell's kids until recess. Later on, when we learned how to "carry our ones" she'd haul out Aunt Jemima.

This Monday was very different. We returned from lunch, over-stuffed with Twinkies and bologna sandwiches, to a room full of wild animals! You heard me-life-sized, glassy-eyed, furry jungle creatures. Reporters from the Dallas Morning News, their bottoms barely squeezing into our tiny wooden desks, were snapping photos right and left. We stared with awe and wonder. How had these beautiful specimens magically appeared in our classroom?

African antelopes, a zebra from Zimbabwe, a stuffed Orangutan from Madagascar and a Gobi-desert Meerkat lined the walls of our room, resplendent with chalk dust.

We felt transported to exotic destinations. As the reporters plied Mrs. Olson with questions, we knew our teacher would be voted “the best teacher in the whole-wide world.” The fourth-graders from gym class peered longingly into our classroom windows, their sweaty nose prints clouding up the glass.

Avis Olson went into her clever spiel. She related the intimate details of the life of an Orangutan. She even swung her arms back and forth in ape-like fashion, scratched her head and pantomimed scarfing down a banana. We were permitted to ask any question we wished. No inquiries were off-limits. Do meerkats have boogers? Can antelopes mate standing up? Is Zebra skin striped like their fur? Do hawks eat maggots? Yes. Yes. No. Yes. Mrs. Olson grinned and confidently answered every query.

I kept wondering who scooped out the animals’ guts and stuffed their bodies with cotton batting. That must be a creepy job. And how do they keep the animal’s original shape? Why don’t they all look like bean bags?

We petted, hugged and posed with each taxi-dermied carcass. Every child was allowed to howl, growl, chirp and caw to our heart’s delight. We beat our chests like the goofy gorillas and swung our trunks like the majestic elephants. In retrospect, I wonder which environmental agency would have protested such cold-blooded killing of these wild beasts. Nobody cared about wildlife preservation back then. You could shoot as many bald eagles and polar bears as you wished. I’ve been told they both taste like chicken.

Zoo day still makes me smile. The wonder of God’s creatures, the smile of a loving teacher, and the beauty of a spring day were mine to enjoy.

“How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” Ps 104:24

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.” Psalm 8

- The psalmist in Psalm 104 states that everything was made by God’s wisdom. When you see the uniqueness of each of his creatures, how does it bless your heart? Think of the instincts animals have to provide and protect themselves. Does it give you encouragement to know that God loves and protects you as well?
- David’s psalm, Psalm 8, is a worshipper glancing down from a heavenly perspective at God’s work in the world. What do you learn about the nature of man from this passage?
- What is the purpose of praise? How can our praise be childlike and humble?
- David says God “crowns man with glory and honor.” Does that give you a deeper confidence in His ability to use His authority to do His kingdom work?