

How Like A Gentle Spirit C Eric Lincoln 1987 United Methodist Hymnal #115

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If you'd like to hear the song: <https://youtu.be/PFCsF-b1UjI>

How like a gentle spirit deep within, God reigns our fervent passions day by day,
And gives us strength to challenge and to win despite the perils of our chosen way.

Let God be God wherever life may be; let every tongue bear witness to the call;
All humankind is one by God's decree; let God be God, let God be God for all.

God like a mother eagle hovers near on mighty wings of power manifest;
God like a gentle shepherd stills our fear, and comforts us against a peaceful breast.

When in our vain pretensions we conspire to shape God's image as we see our own,
Hark to the voice above our base desires; God is the sculptor, we the broken stone.

Through all our fretful claims of sex and race the universal love of God shines through,
For God is love transcending style and place and all the idle options we pursue.

PSALM 23 *"God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, You find me quiet pools to drink from. True to Your word, You let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when You walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure. You serve me a six-course dinner right in front of my enemies. You revive my drooping head; my cup brims with blessing. Your beauty and love chase after me every day of my life. I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of my life."* The Message¹

"How like a gentle spirit deep within, God reigns our fervent passions day by day,
And gives us strength to challenge and to win despite the perils of our chosen way."

In the Psalm, can you see God giving strength? What kind of strength? Have you ever had an experience like that? Describe it. If you haven't, why might that be?

The verse refers to "our chosen way." Can our choices cause our way to go "through Death Valley"? Why do you think that happens? What choices can bring us out of Death Valley?

Verse 2 says "All humankind is one by God's decree; let God be God, let God be God for all."

What does "let God be God" mean to you? Are there times you haven't let God be God? Describe one of those situations? What was that like?

What does "let God be God for all" mean to you? Have you experienced a time when it felt like someone was trying to keep God from being God for all? Were you an observer, or one of the "all" being excluded? Describe the situation. What was your reaction?

Historically, God is portrayed as “He”. In verse 3, God is compared to a “mother eagle.” Have you ever considered the feminine aspect of God? If you haven’t, take some time to do that now. How do you feel about a female God as opposed to the traditional male God? Why do you think you feel this way? Do you think the male and female aspects are mutually exclusive? Explain.

Genesis 1:26-27 *“Then God said ‘Let us make humanity in Our image to resemble Us so that they may take charge of fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the things crawling on the earth.’ God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.”* Common English Bible²

“When in our vain pretensions we conspire to shape God’s image as we see our own, Hark to the voice above our base desires; God is the sculptor, we the broken stone.”

When you try to visualize God, what image do you see? Genesis says “God created humanity in God’s own image”, not that we look like God, but that we share some aspects. We are similar, but not clones.

The Bible doesn’t give a detailed description of what God looks like. Why do you think that is? Does not knowing what God looks like change your perception of God?

As humans, we often describe God with human characteristics. Why do you think we do that? Can this practice limit our understanding of God? Our understanding of God’s capabilities? What limits do you see?

“Through all our fretful claims of sex and race the universal love of God shines through, For God is love transcending style and place and all the idle options we pursue.”

Psalm 36:7 *“How precious is Your constant love, O God! All humanity takes refuge in the shadow of Your wings.”* The Living Bible³

What does the phrase “the universal love of God” mean to you? Does the concept of God’s love “transcending style and place” change your view of the universality of God’s love? What does refuge in God look like to you? How does it feel? What brought you to this understanding? If this refuge is something you experience, is it something you can share? How? If not, how do you think you might find it?

“Who is quite like You? You, who made me stare trouble in the face,
turn me around; now let me look life in the face again.”

Psalm 71:19b-20a The Message¹

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