

“God’s Love You Notes”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Psalm 1: Select Verses & Translations, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 85:11-12, Psalm 19:1, Psalm 8:1, 3-5 & 9, Psalm 148:7, Psalm 121:1-2, Psalm 148:9, Psalm 148:10, Psalm 100:1-2, & Psalm 46

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Prayer for Understanding Gracious God, we praise you for the many ways you communicate your love. Help us perceive your love. Amen

God has filled the cosmos with “love you notes”. Jesus said: **Matthew 6: 22-23, 30-34 MSG** “Your eyes are windows into your body. If you open your eyes wide in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a musty cellar. If you pull the blinds on your windows, what a dark life you will have! “If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don’t you think God will attend to you, take pride in you, do God’s best for you? What I am trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way God works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how God works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don’t worry about missing out. You will find all your everyday human concerns will be met. “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”

Open your senses wide to wonder. See God’s “love you notes”. God made and sustains a cosmos abundant with glory. You are more glorious, more loved, more cherished by God than the grandest creation in the cosmos.

The Apostle Paul wrote: **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.” We pray without ceasing by paying attention to God’s “love you notes”.

It is easier to rejoice, pray, and give thanks on a vacation in a wonder-filled place. I am thankful for you allowing me to work and have fun in Hawaii.

God has filled every place with wonder, even cold, snowy Minnesota. I was surprised by a conversation with a local artist. During our conversation, he explained that he grew up in Utah. My trips to Utah have filled me with wonder, the shades of red and the rock formations. He explained that he regularly visited Minnesota which to him is one of the most beautiful places on earth, the lakes, the shades of green, the forests, the change of seasons, the fall colors. Now that he lives in Hawaii, he misses the wonder of Utah and Minnesota. God’s love you notes are everywhere waiting to be savored.

The psalms are a collection of prayers by people in all sorts of circumstances. Even when the psalmist is in the midst of calamity, chaos, and suffering they still notice God’s love, give thanks, rejoice, and worship. The psalmist sings: **Psalm 1: Select verses and translations** “Happy, blessed, joyful are those who thrill to God’s Word, who chew on Scripture day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do.” God’s word includes the wonder of creation.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 34:8** “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The farmers market and roadside stands are full of an array of delicious fruits and vegetables. We have enjoyed rambutan, a colorful, red hairy fruit. To eat it, one splits off the outer peel to reveal an inside that tastes like a cross between an apple and grape around a pit. The avocados are tasty and the size of a softball. We enjoyed a locally grown white pineapple. Even the core was sweet and nonfibrous. We had a coconut where they chopped a small hole then we used a straw to drink the coconut water. After drinking the coconut water, they chopped it open and cut out the coconut meat and then mixed it with fresh pineapple. We savored a taste explosion with a bowl of mango, bananas, and blueberries. We are enjoying a local favorite which is a pancake with a coconut pudding topping. Every good taste you enjoy is a “love you note” from God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 85:11-12 TPT** “Flowers of your faithfulness are blooming on the earth. Righteousness shines down from the sky. Yes, the Lord keeps raining down blessing after blessing and prosperity will drench the land with a bountiful harvest.” We began our trip by staying at Hilo the rainy side of the Big Island. Hilo is the rainiest city in the United States. On average it rains 211 days a year with 127 inches of rain. The result is every shade of green imaginable, leaves as big as me, flowers of every size, shape, and color. God says through every plant you enjoy, “I love you.”

The psalmist sings **Psalm 19:1 NLT** “**The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork.**” **Psalm 148:3 NRSV** “**Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!** One morning, we got up at 3:30am and traveled to the volcano. The stars were so bright it seemed like we could touch them. The stars were numerous and were in multi-levels of brightness. The psalmist sings: **Psalm 8:1, 3-5,9 NLT** “**O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth! Your glory is higher than the heavens. When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. O Lord, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!**” I marvel that God created us more glorious than stars. Each of us shines more majestic than all the stars in the cosmos. Stars help me let go. My worries seem small in the light of the vast cosmos. Knowing that we will be resurrected, God’s honored family, shining with majesty more glorious than the stars fills me with peace, joy, and gratitude. Five miles from the volcano crater the entire horizon was orange. The intensity of the orange grew with every step. At the crater rim, we saw the luminous orange lava. Lava sprayed from a cone. The fragments landed and continued to glow as it cooled. Lava danced. Lava pooled, the surface cooled to black and mushroomed up. Suddenly, a side broke loose and lava flowed out. The black surface cracked, oozed, and flowed down the lava river in chunks. Lava bubbled up. In 2018, the crater lake flowed down underground through a lava tube and surfaced 15 to 25 miles down the mountain. The lava consumed everything in its path. The lava covered several roads. In places the road is topped with 20 feet of lava. The lava flowed to the coast creating new land. There are already coconut sprouts on the rough, rugged 2018 lava. God is active in reforming the earth and expanding the cosmos. God is communicating the love of Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer through stars, lava, land, and ocean.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 148:7 NLT** “**Praise the Lord from the earth, you creatures of the ocean depths.**” One of my favorite activities is to snorkel with the sea turtles. Adults are 3 to 4 feet long and weigh 240 to 420 pounds. For a while, there was a turtle family swimming circles around me as they munched on dinner. Leslie enjoys watching them sun themselves on the beach. We saw whales on the horizon. I saw every color, shape, and size of fish. Some of them had spectacular luminescent colors. God expresses love for you through the animals you enjoy.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 121:1-2 MSG** “**I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven and earth, and mountains.** If you calculate from the sea floor Mauna Kea is 33,500 feet, the tallest mountain on earth. Everest is the tallest mountain above sea level at 29,029 feet. Mauna Kea is 13,796 feet above sea level. You can drive to the top where the summit is dotted with telescopes. The sunrises and sunsets above the clouds are spectacular. The stars are intense. From Hilo, you can see the snow and occasional glimpse the sunlight reflecting off the silver doomed telescope buildings. God’s strength that made the mountains cares, nurtures, and loves you.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 148:9 NLT** “**Praise the Lord mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars.**” The mango trees are massive, some are 100 feet tall with a 35 foot canopy. Some of the banyan trees take up an entire city block. The colorful rainbow trees delight. Hiking in the jungles around Hilo we discovered a vast variety of trees, some of them have flowers of red, orange, and yellow, some are covered with vines, some have orchards, some have white berries. God says “I love you” through trees.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 148:10** “**Praise the Lord wild animals and all livestock, small scurrying animals and birds.**” There are a variety of colorful birds in Hawaii. Mostly there are chickens everywhere and in great numbers. Outside our balcony we can see three chicken families. During a hurricane, domestic chickens got loose and mated with native chickens. There are no predators for chickens in Hawaii, so the chicken population has exploded. It is an interesting experience to enjoy a chicken sandwich in an open air café with chickens scurrying around your table. Even a chicken expresses God’s love.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 100:1-2 NRSV** “**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing.** The volcano sounds like breathing. The volcano takes a deep breath in before it exhales lava. The volcano gurgles, wheezes, and crackles. At times, the ocean is a soothing rhythm of pulsating water. Other times the ocean crashes with forceful thunder. In places the rocks dance as the waters recedes creating a pleasing chorus of percussion. The jungle is teeming with a symphony of delightful sounds. Songbirds serenade our walks and leisure on the lanai. The roosters start crowing around 3am and continue until about 10am. Our rental does not have air conditioning, so we have the windows open for the cool refreshing air. One rooster likes to stand on the balcony railing, and he starts crowing at 3am. Often when I am startled from sleep and count blessings to fall back asleep. Even with earplugs, it is uncertain if we will get accustomed to the crowing. God even says “I love you” through the crowing of a rooster.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 46 MSG & NLT** “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! River fountains splash joy, cooling God’s city, this sacred home of the Most High. God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God’s voice thunders and the earth melts! Attention, all! See the marvels of God! God plants flowers and trees all over the earth, bans war from pole to pole, breaks all the weapons across God’s knee. “Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything.” “Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world.” The Lord of Heaven’s Angels is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.

We have seen fearful events. Lava that consumed portions of a town in 2018. On coconut island, there is a marker indicating the height of a tsunami wave of 26 feet. The violent force of the waves crashing on the rocks, the water foaming. And yet even in the midst of destructive forces we are to fear not for God is our refuge and strength. Calamity happens to everyone. We all will experience a physical death. And through it all God is with us, loving us, transforming us, bringing new life, resurrecting us to eternal life. God is preparing an eternal home that is safe, secure, and glorious for all of us. God invites us to be still in the midst of our busy lives, to savor God’s love, to know that all will be glorious for eternity. God loves you today. God will love you always.

God is filling your daily life with “love you notes”. Pray without ceasing by paying attention to the goodness and love around you and within you. Pay attention to the good in the midst of difficult situations. Pray without ceasing by asking, “Where is God in that?” Seek God’s “love you notes” in a sunset, your favorite food, a good book, pleasing music, delightful art, being cozy at home, walking in nature regardless of the weather. Take a break when you are able, it may be a vacation, a staycation, or a few minutes in the shower. Savor your “love you notes”. Rediscover your sense of wonder. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.” **Psalm 1** “Happy, blessed, joyful are those who thrill to God’s Word. God loves you today. God will love you always. Amen