

“What a Wonderful World” by Louis Armstrong

Habakkuk 1:3b–5, ... I am surrounded by people who love to argue and fight. ⁴The law has become paralyzed, and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the righteous, so that justice has become perverted. ⁵The LORD replied, “Look around at the nations; look and experience wonder! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn’t believe even if someone told you about it.”

Today’s song was first sung by Louis Armstrong in 1967, it was written to provide a hopeful response to the tense and strident cultural voices of his day. The song echoes the prophecy of Habakkuk, “look around ... there’s more to be hopeful for than you imagine.”

A. The wonder of nature.

I see trees of green,
red roses too.
I see them bloom,
for me and you.
And I think to myself,
what a wonderful world.

We’re about to experience the most beautiful time of year here in the mountains, not trees of green, but trees of yellow, orange, blazing red. It’s quite easy to express wonder in the face of fall foliage.

But, really, what do these colors tell us? That there is intelligent design, and that intelligence is available to me personally!

Romans 1:19-20, Even wicked people know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. ²⁰For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

Do you see the very purpose of nature’s wonder? That we would *know* God. Personal relationship is at the heart of God’s creative genius. God’s desire is to “wow” us into a relationship with Him!

B. The wonder of mystery.

I see skies of blue,
And clouds of white.
The bright blessed day,
The dark sacred night.
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

You can handle a bright orange leaf freshly fallen from a tree in your yard. You can crinkle it in your hands, smell it, taste it if you want! But, clouds? The deep blue sky? The vast expanse of night time darkness? They are distant, mysterious, and majestic. They speak to our smallness in this Universe and the mystery of what it means to *exist*.

Psalm 19:1-4a, 7, The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. ² Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known. ³ They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard. ⁴ Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world ... ⁷ The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. There is indeed a mystery to living here ... but, it is a mystery *revealed*. God has given us a word of clarity in the midst of blessing and sacred mystery:

“The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.”

The twofold purpose of God’s Word is to *revive* us and make us *wise*. Energized and informed! That’s God’s goal for our daily lives. How? Get into His Word.

C. The wonder of diversity.

The colors of the rainbow,
So pretty in the sky.
Are also on the faces,
Of people going by,
I see friends shaking hands.
Saying, ‘How do you do?’
They’re really saying,
‘I love you’.

What was going on in our society in 1967 when Louis Armstrong introduced this song? Our nation was going through some tough discussion regarding civil rights

and the place of minorities in our culture. On June 12, 1967 the Supreme Court struck down Virginia's ban in interracial marriage.

The song has already said, "look at all the colors: green, red, blue, white, and dark." Now, the rainbow colors are on our faces too! Diversity is beautiful. God's intelligent design is not just for nature, it's beauty is also seen in the different faces we see every day. Now, this seems obvious to us, but then, it was hotly debated.

Racism is sin. It's sin because it points an angry finger in the face of God and says, "diversity has ruined our nation!" In fact, diversity is one of the strengths of our nation.

Galatians 3:26-29, ²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus ... ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Prejudice demands that my personal preferences are what we should rally around. For the Christian, it is faith that brings unity in the beautiful mosaic of diversity we find in our world.

The song is pretty clear, "I love you" are the wonderful words we need to hear more and more.

PINCH POINT: Do I truly love people who are different than me? The person with whom I disagree with the most ... can I shake his hand and express genuine love for him?

D. The wonder of progress.

I hear babies cry,
I watch them grow,
They'll learn much more,
Than I'll ever know.
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

In June of this year the Chinese did something remarkable ... for the first time ever, they created a machine as powerful as the human brain: the "Milky-Way 2" supercomputer is capable of 33 trillion operations per second.

Let's qualify this exponential increase of knowledge with an important Bible verse: Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

Knowledge without discipline is risky. You know where that Chinese computer is located? At their "National University of *Defense Technology*."

Yes, I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.
Oh yeah.

Which brings me back to where we started, Habakkuk 1:5, "The LORD replied, "Look around at the nations; look and experience wonder! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it."

It's not what WE can do. It's ironic that computing power is measured in "flops." It's not our flops that count, but rather, what God can do in our lives. In our family. In our nation. And around the world.

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, we pray for perspective. Help us to see things as You see them. Nature, sky, diversity, human progress ... we ask You to put each of these in their proper place. You are Lord of all, and all of these, and all of us. In Jesus' name, amen!"