

## Thought for the Day 19th May - Ian Whittington

Back in March Geoff Roberts and I ventured off on a bushwalk in Tasmania. It was a celebratory walk with some "old" (in both senses of the word) bushwalking friends of mine from thirty years ago. With regard for our ages and physical capabilities we decided to spend a few days in the Southern end of the Cradle Mountain National Park and do shorter day walks and base ourselves at a couple of huts. For the more energetic there would be a couple of climbs to places with wonderful names such as The Labyrinth and The Acropolis. When we headed off, we knew that the coronavirus was starting to have an impact in Australia but Tasmania was open for business as were its National Parks.

A couple of days before the end of our adventure we were based at Pine Valley Hut in an area of peaks and old growth rainforest. A few of the party, including Geoff headed off to climb The Acropolis but I decided I would walk alone for a couple of hours up the Cephissus Creek track into the rainforest. It's not possible to describe an old growth rainforest to someone. You have to be in the rainforest to get it. I will try as best I can.

For a start, it is very green and dimly lit. When there is no wind it is quiet, and the only noise is the gentle burbling sound of water as Cephissus Creek moves slowly along toward Lake St. Clair. I was alone and surrounded by forest giants. The huge canopy of the Myrtle Beech and the occasional towering species of Eucalypt. Then there are the understory trees. Most of these are Tasmanian endemic species, which means that they are only found in Tasmania. Beautiful King Billy Pines, Blackwoods and Sassafras. Below these are smaller bushes and on the forest floor, the debris that has fallen from above and hundreds of species of fern, lichen, moss and fungi. Also in the forest are the senior citizens. These are the Huon Pines. There are living Huon Pines in Tassie that have been carbon dated to three thousand years of age. That's right; they had been standing and were a thousand years old when Jesus was a toddler. Around me I saw young Huon Pines. Maybe they were only forty or fifty years old. They will go on to be the oldies when their parent finally falls to the forest floor and starts the process of decomposition to become part of the rich, life supporting organic soil. This is a beautiful, living, ancient but mostly silent place.

A forest such as this that has never been impacted by fire, landslip or the hand of man is often called a climax forest. It is in perfect balance. It is as it has been for thousands of years.

I love the old growth forests and as I stood there with an amount of emotion I thought about my own little flicker of life; so short compared to the age around me. Compared to this, am I insignificant? Our creator God has made this amazing place that I stand in and I am overawed. How does God see me?

I am no less amazing than the rainforest and he has shown me that he loves me.

Psalm 139, verses 13 to 16.

<sup>13</sup> *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

<sup>14</sup> *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

<sup>15</sup> *My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

<sup>16</sup> *Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.*

He sent his son Jesus to die for me so that I can have a relationship with him. I am a child of God. I am as amazing a creation as the rainforest.

When I returned to the hut, some of the climbers had returned from their climb and had found limited mobile phone reception up high. "Would you believe people are fighting over toilet rolls in supermarkets!". In a few days the world that we had been isolated from had changed dramatically. It was time to get out of the park and return home.

Geoff and I flew out of Tassie the evening that Tassie commenced closing down.