

# On Mungo Park's Finding a Tuft of Green Moss in the African Desert

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

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*The sermon emphasizes finding hope and beauty in God's creation even amidst life's desolate challenges.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:29

**Topics:** "Hope in Despair", "God's Care for Creation"

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## Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne reflects on Mungo Park's journey through the African desert, emphasizing the contrast between overwhelming danger and the small yet beautiful tuft of green moss that provided him with hope. This moment of admiration for the moss leads M'Cheyne to ponder God's care for His creation, suggesting that if God can nurture such a small plant in a desolate place, He surely cares for humanity. The sermon encourages believers to find hope and inspiration in the midst of life's wilderness, reminding them that even in despair, God is present and attentive to their struggles. M'Cheyne calls for a bold faith that seeks to share the message of salvation, just as Park sought to explore the unknown. Ultimately, the sermon inspires listeners to lift their eyes to God, who brings life and beauty even in the bleakest circumstances.

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## Transcript

"Whatever way I turned, nothing appeared but danger and difficulty. I saw myself in the midst of a vast wilderness, in the depth of the rainy season, naked and alone, surrounded by savage animals, and men still more savage. I was five hundred miles from the nearest European settlement. At this moment, painful as my reflections were, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss in fructification irresistibly caught my eye. I mention this to show from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation; for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of it's roots, leaves, and capsule, without admiration. Can that Being, thought I, who planted, watered, and brought to perfection, in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not. I started up, and, disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forward, assured that relief was at hand, and I was not disappointed."

--PARK'S TRAVELS.

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The sun had reached his mid-day height,  
And poured down floods of burning light  
On Afric's barren land;  
No cloudy veil obscured the sky,  
And the hot breeze that struggled by  
Was filled with glowing sand.  
No mighty rock upreared its head,  
To bless the wanderer with its shade,  
In all the weary plain;  
No palm-trees with refreshing green,  
To glad the dazzled eye, were seen,  
But one wide sandy main.  
Dauntless and daring was the mind  
That left all home-born joys behind  
These deserts to explore --  
To trace the mighty Niger's course,  
And find it bubbling from its source,  
In wilds untrod before.  
And ah! shall we less daring show,  
Who nobler ends and motives know  
Than ever heroes dream --  
Who seek to lead the savage mind  
The precious fountain-head to find  
Whence flows salvation's stream?  
Let peril, nakedness, and sword,  
Hot barren sands, and despot's word  
Our burning zeal oppose --

Yet, Martyn-like, we'll lift the voice,  
Bidding the wilderness rejoice  
And blossom as the rose.  
Sad, faint, and weary on the sand  
Our traveller sat him down; his hand  
Covered his burning head.  
Above, beneath, behind, around, --  
No resting for the eye he found;  
All nature seemed as dead.  
One tiny tuft of moss alone,  
Mantling with freshest green a stone,  
Fixed his delighted gaze:  
Through bursting tears of joy he smiled,  
And while he raised the tendril wild,  
His lips o'erflowed with praise.  
"Oh, shall not He who keeps thee green  
Here in the waste, unknown, unseen,  
Thy fellow-exile save?  
He who commands the dew to feed  
Thy gentle flower, can surely lead  
Me from a scorching grave!"  
The heaven-sent plant new hope inspired --  
New courage all his bosom fired,  
And bore him safe along;  
Till with the evening's cooling shade  
He slept within the verdant glade,  
Lulled by the negro's song.

Thus, we in this world's wilderness,  
Where sin and sorrow, guilt, distress,  
Seem undisturbed to reign,  
May faint because we feel alone,  
With none to strike our favourite tone  
And join our homeward strain.  
Yet often in the bleakest wild  
Of this dark world, some heaven-born child,  
Expectant of the skies,  
Amid the low and vicious crowd,  
Or in the dwellings of the proud,  
Meets our admiring eyes.  
From gazing on the tender flower,  
We lift our eyes to Him whose power  
Hath all it's beauty given;  
Who, in this atmosphere of death,  
Hath given it life, and form, and breath,  
And brilliant hues of heaven.  
Our drooping faith, revived by sight,  
Anew her pinion plumes for flight.  
New hope distends the breast;  
With joy we mount on eagle wing,  
With bolder tone our anthem sing,  
And seek the pilgrim's rest.

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