

What A Mighty God We Serve!

Psalm 104

September 10, 2011

Please open your Bibles to Psalm 104. I hope everyone is looking forward to our picnic today. Everybody loves a picnic right? What did the mama Llama say to the baby llama as they prepared for a picnic? Alpaca lunch. A guy asks his friend at work on Monday morning, "How was your picnic on Sunday?" "Horrible. Everyone came down with food poisoning, I knew the hot dogs might have gone bad, but turns out the brats were the wurst."

What a great day, great time, and great place to worship God, amen? Today is a prime opportunity to meditate on God's magnificent works in Creation and praise Him for them. David did that often and whoever wrote this Psalm was doing it as well. The Psalmist takes us on a tour through Creation. Hear the Word of the Lord in Ps 104 Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. 2 He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent 3 and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. 4 He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. 5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. 6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.

The Psalmist helps us see and appreciate all that is around us and realize that every part of Creation is a display of God's power, wisdom, and ingenuity. He begins with general praise for God's greatness and His clothes. Did you ever think about what God wears? The Psalmists says He clothes Himself with splendor and majesty and wraps Himself with light. How would you like that kind of a coat? Of course this is where Chris Tomlin got the inspiration for his song, How Great Is Our God straight from this Psalm. The Splendor of the King, Clothed in majesty, He wraps Himself in light. Etc.

The Psalmist also reminds us of something we discussed this summer from our VBS theme, He stretches out the heavens like a tent. Like an EZ up. He made the heavens to serve as a canopy over the earth. The atmosphere that God created on the Second Day that provides us with oxygen to breathe and water for our crops and to separate the waters beneath from the waters above. The Atmosphere shields us from the sun's intense heat and deadly radiation and meteors that would take us out. When's the last time you thanked God for the atmosphere? Now's a good time. What a Mighty God we serve!

And I love the imagery of Vs 3 where the clouds form God's chariot, His limo, and He rides the winds, holding them back with a halter as He cruises all over His

creation. This also reminds us of how the Holy Spirit, or Holy Breath, came like a rushing mighty wind on Pentecost. Indeed He still rides the wind.

Vs 5 indicates the earth is set on its foundations and will never be moved. Don't worry about this planet being blown out of its orbit or off its axis by a nuclear bomb or an asteroid or etc. No! God set it on firm foundations. And then He clothed it with the oceans. Originally the whole earth, even the highest mountains were under water until He made dry land appear on Day 3. The same thing happened during the flood of Noah's day when the highest mountains were covered to a depth of 20 feet. There are marine fossils on top of Mt. Everest!

Vs 7, But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; 8 they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. That would be the Shenandoah Valley river basin. The Potomac and Rappahannock, the Nile, the Danube, the Amazon and all the rest. God carved the valleys with a pass of His finger easier than we can pull ours through icing on a cake. Vs 9 You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth. So in spite of the hype about global warming and the oceans rising, they're only coming up so high. It may very well be higher than it is now. It has been before, but there is an upper limit. God promised to never destroy the earth again by water. This also helps us understand that boundaries are good. Not only for oceans and rivers but also for people. God has set those boundaries as well and we cross them to our own destruction.

VS 10 He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. 11 They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. Way up in Bergton there are several springs that bubble up out of the earth forming the headwaters of the North Fork of the Shenandoah. Back at Orkney, I've seen the spring where water gushes up out of the ground to form Stony Creek. And a thousand others down in the hollows of these mountains and all over the earth providing water for the beasts of the fields as well as the wild critters of the woods. For people in our towns and cities.

I mentioned last Sunday that God is the Master Plumber. He designed and installed the water cycle complete with heat exchangers, pressure switches, check valves, reservoirs, and all sorts of incredible innovations we're still discovering. I wish we had time this morning to trace the many tributaries that flow together to make up our river which empties into the South Fork and then into the Potomac and then into the Chesapeake Bay and then into the Atlantic only to evaporate and fall on these mountains once again to recharge the aquifers that nourish our springs and streams as it all starts over. What a mighty God we serve!

And oh yes, don't forget about the birds. Say birds. They nest by the waters and sing among the branches. Are you thankful for birds today? Not only the chickens we eat and the eggs we poach, but the eagles that soar way up yonder and the wrens that sing way down here. Merlin app this spring. There are about 10,000 species of birds all over the world with over 50 billion total individuals. And their music is incredible. God designed them to sing. He gave them twice as many membranes in their vocal chords than we have and they're at the top of each lung separately so they can sing two notes at the same time. Some birds can sing up to 45 notes per second and remember many songs. Mockingbirds have up to 150 songs in their repertoire while nightingales can have 300. Many birds have perfect pitch and some even finish the songs of others while singing back and forth. Praise God for birds.

Vs 14 He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate — bringing forth food from the earth: 15 wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart. So God provides food for both cattle and for us. Plants for us to cultivate, to grow so we can eat and survive. One of the most common Jewish prayers is, “Blessed art Thou, O LORD our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.” God has designed an ingenious system of seeds and roots and shoots and leaves and photosynthesis and fruit which is another cycle. Within it are cycles for nitrogen, carbon, and other nutrients. TD Jakes has commented on how futuristic God's plans have always been building into each seed a billion more plants. A billion more seasons and a trillion more fruits. An eternal plan! What a mighty God we serve!

He makes grapes grow that produce many different products as well as oil-not 10w40 weight, but olive oil from olives. Bread that sustains our hearts. We're in the midst of a drought right now, but thankfully we still have plenty of food to eat anyway, look at these tables. And our minds can easily recall how most years in September, our corn has filled out awaiting the harvest. And wheat for bread as well as cucumbers, zucchinis and tomatoes. Can you imagine what the Psalmist would have written if he had ever tasted tomatoes? There would be 151 Psalms and Ps 119 might not even be the longest ☺. Just sayin'.

George Washington Carver understood Creation to be an incredible gift from God and a treasure trove of provision for us. He set out to find out all he could and gave us 118 products from sweet potatoes and 300 from peanuts including Worcestershire Sauce and peanut oil which made it possible for someone else to invent peanut butter. This Wed is National Peanut day. When asked what inspired him, he said, “I just took a handful of peanuts and looked at them. “Great Creator,” I said, “Why did you make the peanut? ... With such knowledge as I had of chemistry and physics I set to work to take the peanut apart... Then I merely went on to try different combinations of those parts... and the result is what you see—these ...different products all made from peanuts.” Imagine how much more is still locked up in acorns and pumpkins, trout and

walnuts, etc. And imagine how many more products and benefits we'd already have if all scientists sought to discover what God created and asked His help in finding it.

Vs 16 The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. 17 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees. Say trees. Most of Lebanon's cedars have been cut down but the few that remain are incredible rivaled only by the Redwoods and Sequoias of California. Unbelievable trees some of which are over 3000 years old. The first limb on the Grizzly Giant is 6 feet in diameter and 95 feet above the ground. The trunk of the tree is 30' in diameter. It is still only the 26th largest tree in the world and grew from a seed about the size of an oatmeal flake. Who planted it? Who planted all the trees? Vs 16 tells us God did. Although humans have gotten in on the tree planting business, God still plants most of the estimated 3 trillion trees in the world. If you counted 1 per second day and night it would take you nearly 32,000 years to count all the trees. By then there'd be more. He deserves an Arbor Day award, does He not? And the birds nest in them. A hummingbird's is only about the size of a big marble but an eagle's nest can weigh up to a ton. God designed and built the condos all these birds would need to hatch and raise their youngins. What a mighty God we serve!

Vs 18 The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coney. Nancy and I have seen the wild goats and the coney at En Gedi in Israel that the writer probably had in mind. All over the world various species of goats and sheep inhabit the peaks and the tiny rodents eek out their own existence in the rocks.

Vs 19 The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. 20 You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. 21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. 22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. 23 Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening. God programmed the solar system to keep perfect time. The sun and the moon obey God faithfully even if we don't. We know with certainty that the sun will set at exactly 7:30 tonight and rise tomorrow morning at 6:51. The nocturnal creatures come out at dusk and rule the night till morning's light when we go back to work. Not too many people worked nights in those days, although shepherds did as well as night watchmen.

Vs 24 How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small. 26 There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

God loves variety! He made so many different kinds of mammals and birds and trees and flowers and fish and bugs and stars and tastes and smells and etc. God may be

many things but He's not boring! How many are His works! In wisdom He made them all. And He filled the earth with life. Even Devil's Tower has snakes and rodents on top. Landlocked lakes have fish. Deep caves have insects. All the universe is full of His stars and galaxies. No scientist can master all Creation. There are so many specialties because God's works are so many and varied. And the oceans, Oh my goodness. Say ocean. We know more about many stars than we know about the deepest oceans on our own planet. The oceans teeming with creatures. There are an estimated 3.5 trillion fish. And I can't catch one. Even more than trees! Both large and small. From minute plankton to the great Blue whales that eat the plankton. Just last month they discovered a new form of sea life on the Alaskan sea floor. And there is leviathan, which many believe was a dinosaur that may yet swim the deepest seas. What a Might God we serve!

Vs 27 These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. 28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. 30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

These verses reveal that God is still very much involved in His Creation. He's not like a watchmaker who designed it all, wound it up and watched it run. No. He actively feeds the animals and fish and us. He opens His hand to provide. Picture His open hand extended over the earth distributing provisions for all living things. In the same way He can withhold it and cause starvation. He gives life and takes life. He creates and renews the earth. This Psalm hopefully helps us understand that God doesn't just care about humans. We are the pinnacle of His Creation and the only part chosen to bear His image, but He also cares about the sparrows that fall to the ground and the eagles that soar in the sky. God loves all of His creation and He said it was very good!

For all the beauty of His work, we realize it is fallen and broken. Adam's sin did not just impact humans, it also introduced death and decay into all this world. But Romans 8:19-21 says all creation is looking forward to ultimate liberation from decay! Jesus was not only the Word God used to create all that is in the beginning, He also died to redeem **all** Creation, not just people. The glimpses the Bible gives us of the Millennium and the new earth describe a restored creation where lions lay down with lambs and children play with cobras. It's going to be a restored place where for the first time, we'll see what Adam saw before the fall. Even so come Lord Jesus!

And so we have a responsibility to care for Creation, the original job God gave Adam that we mentioned last week. Our call to the environment goes much higher than that from science or the EPA or Greenpeace. We have a responsibility that supersedes them all for it comes from God! We can use and benefit from Creation but we must not destroy it. Someone with a green mind once said, "We're not using the land that belonged to our ancestors, we're borrowing it from our descendants." Although that's a

neat way to think of it, we even have a higher call than that. It belongs to God. And we'll have to answer to Him one day for how we cared for whatever we had control over. How we treat Creation is a spiritual matter.

And so, as we contemplate both the Creation we have now and the future glorified Creation, let's echo what the Psalmist says in vs 31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works — 32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. 33 I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord. 35 But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Creator for all that His Creation teaches us and provides for us and for all God's power displayed through it. What a mighty God we serve!