

Psalm 104 / Bless the Lord, Our Creator

Good evening church, go ahead and grab your bible and turn to the book of Psalm chapter 104. We are only going to look at this chapter because it's got 35 verses in it and we are going to be doing a good bit of work walking our way through it.

One of the main things we will see in this Psalm is how, in a way, it follows the narrative of creation presented in Genesis 1. So as we walk through this psalm I will point out the elements that mimic the Genesis narrative as the psalmist praises God for his creativity and creation.

Lets read.

Psalm 104.

Pray

Introduction: Favorite Places, Seattle and Broken Bow...why....CREATION.

A Lord of Splendor and Majesty (1-4 | Day 1 & 2)

First we see in verses 1-4 our Lord is one of splendor and majesty.

The psalmist calls himself to bless the Lord much like the previous psalm, 103 does. There is a call for the writer to bless the LORD and he indicates that Yahweh is His God.

He communicates an intimate relationship with God.

He speaks of his majesty and splendor. Majesty has the connotation of royalty, but it can also mean a weight or depth to who God is and his character. God holds a sense of weightiness in his presence and works.

Verse 2 tells us that he wraps himself in light, lays out the sky like a canopy. It is in this verse the psalmist begins to set his song upon an outline of Genesis 1.

Genesis 1 explains in verse 1 that God creates the heavens and the earth. The heavens being that which is above the water and land. And in verse 3 he creates light, which we know later is assigned to the Sun, but here this light is from God himself, as if he is wearing it like a garment.

He also "lays the beams of his chambers on the water" this speaks to the creation of the heavenly realm.

Day 2 of the creation narrative points this out.

Genesis 2:6-8 says, *And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day."*

Traditional Hebrew of the created order place two areas of water around us. One around and below the land we live on, and one area of water above us in the sky.

Some common reasons for this understanding was first there was no modern science during the formation of these ideas, but also the sky is blue, just like the large bodies of waters around them.

Also the sky brings form rain, which would have been another element adding to them thinking the heavens, the sky and beyond was an area of water like the sea.

So the psalmist is saying the Lord has separated these two areas of water as a might creator. He also paints a picture of God's majesty and rule over this creation is saying God, "makes the clouds his chariot, ride the wings of the wind, and makes this messengers winds and his ministers a flaming fire."

This language denotes that creation is God's, it is his that he created in splendor and majesty, and the beauty of it comes from him.

Application:

One of the major issues in Christianity in the 20th and 21st century as been the debate on creationism.

It is a debate that seek to create a dichotomy between the Bible and science, but we know when understood rightly what each of these are, they are not at odds.

But so many Christians can get swept up in the debating and arguing of days of creation, the age of earth, and the how of how creation was made, but I think the psalmist is pointing us to something else.

The psalmist is pointing us to the need to be captivated by creation in a way that brings worship to God, so that we might bless the LORD. He wants us to along creation and not just at creation.

Illustration:

CS Lewis has a great quote that helps us understand this idea.

He says, "I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with

the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it. Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences.¹

Instead of looking at creation as a foundation for us to have debate or arguments with others, look along creation for us to be captivated by God and bless his name.

Is there a time and place for those debates, sure, but they should be few and far between the times we worship God because we are captivated by his creation.

A Lord Who Rules Land and Sea (5-9 | Day 3)

Next we see in verses 5-9 that the Lord is one who Rules the Land and the Sea, and we will notice that day 3 is mostly represented in this section.

The first part of day 3 in the creation narrative is shown here where Genesis 1:9-10 say, And God said, *“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

This is the point of this section as the psalm show God’s control in separating the water and land.

The psalmist communicates the rule and control God has in creation in this section. He uses several phrases to point this out.

Verse 5 says, *“he set the earth on its foundation, it should never be moved.”* Verse 6 again show the cosmology of ancient Jewish understanding. God has created the foundation of the earth and covered with deep, which is water, then water stood above the mountain.

Then verse 7 speaks again to his rule as we rebuke the water to allow for the mountains to rise.

This language, of rebuking the water, is a poetic way of showing the absolute control that God has in creation.

Then we see that all the water sits in the place God appointed it.

Lastly, in verse 9 we see God’s rule in the boundary set for the water and then a mention of the flood is found here when the verse says, *“that they might not again cover the earth.”*

¹ https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/Reflections_Looking_Along_and_At_Everything

This phrase of course speaks to the flood involving Noah later in Genesis and God's promise not to send another flood on the earth.

Illustration: Camping in Seattle

Studying through this passage reminded me of the summer of 2010 when I spent the summer serving in Seattle and one weekend we got to go camping near Mt. Rainer, which is one of the highest points in North America and is north of Seattle.

But there was a potent moment that I remember that I was captivated by God creation in how he set the mountains and water in their places.

We had set up camp and in Seattle in the summer it didn't get dark until around 9-10pm, but I remember being in my hammock just in the tree line of the camp site and looking to my right and seeing mount Rainer while hearing and seeing a stream to my left that was created from the melting snow from the mountain.

It was a moment that is still with me today that was a realization of God's goodness and power in creating all that I was enjoying in that moment, the setting of the mountains and water in their locations.

I encourage you also as we enjoy creation this week let it lead you to worship and bless the Lord because of its beauty, but also because of the power and purpose God had in his creation.

A Lord Who Provides (10-18 | Day 3b)

The next section, verses 10-18, show us that we should bless the Lord because we have a LORD who provides. We see several things provided in this section.

Streams

In verses 10-12 we see God brings forth this water that he controls in such a way to provide for the animals he has created. The author speaks of springs or streams of water made for the donkeys and every beast of the field.

Trees

Verse 12 points out the use of branches from trees by the birds who sing. There is also mention of tree in verses 16-17 as well.

The author speaks to the care of the trees, we he says they are "*watered abundantly*" and reminds the reader that "*he planted*" them. And again, we see how they provide shelter for birds.

Rain

Then we see in verse 13 how the LORD waters the mountains and earth, which satisfies the earth. If there is any place that knows the need of rain it would be the delta of Mississippi, without which there is nothing produced.

Vegetation-Grass, vegetables/fruit, grapes, olives, wheat

In verses 14-15 God provides various kinds of vegetation. Grass is first which feeds the live stock of creation.

This need was apparent where we came from in Oklahoma being that so many folks raised cattle, many farmers would lease various fields of land to ensure they had enough grass to feed their cattle.

We also see “*plants for man to cultivate*” in verse 14 as well which covers most of the food we eat, food grown at some point in the ground. Then we see how man cultivates these provisions.

Man cultivates grapes and creates wine, then there is the cultivation of olive to make olive oil, and lastly there is the cultivation of wheat to make bread.

Although man puts in energy and intellect into cultivation of these things, they all start from being given to us by God.

Mountains/ Rocks

The last provision we see in this section is the mountains that provide for the wild goats and the rocks that provide for the rock badgers.

3rd Day

In many ways this section covers the rest of the creation narrative on the 3rd day. Which tells us, “*And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*”

Although we see many animals and even mankind in the passage the passage is really about the provision of the water and land that produces trees and vegetation which is covered in this section of the creation narrative in day 3.

Application: Anxiety vs. Provision

As we read through that section it should have reminded you of a teaching that Jesus shares with his disciples on the sermon on the mount from Matthew chapter 6. He tells them in verse 25-33,

²⁵“*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more*

than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

What Jesus is not saying is that we should not work and have a vocation and do the things we need to to be able to provide for our families, but what he is saying that your life should not be filled with anxiety because he is our provider.

Anxiety is the constant fear of what might happen in the future, where we create all types of scenarios and situations that keep us from really doing what we need to do in the present and experience the joy that comes with seeking God's kingdom.

Instead in anxiety we are filled with the fear of what if.

So Jesus is calling us, in light of God being the great provider, to not live a life of anxiety because if he cares for creation in the way he does, then he will also do that with us as well.

Illustration:

I can remember my first real struggle with anxiety was in college. It was my junior year of college and I was at the point of having to really settle on a major to finish college with and I can remember basically having a panic attack in my dorm room because I was so overwhelmed with what I did not know.

What would I do for a living, where would I live, who would I be married to, just all the questions you have as your time of college is coming to a close.

And it wasn't until I spent a great amount of time in prayer laying all those fears down to God that I realized he loved me and my future more than I did and He knew what was next so I didn't have to. I just needed to be committed to seek his kingdom day by day and he would take care of the rest.

So tonight, let us rest in knowing that we have a LORD who provides for us.

A Lord Who Governs Time (19-23 | Day 4)

In our next section covering verses 19-23 we see a LORD who governs time and we see day 4 of creation uses as the framework for these verses.

Day 4 of the creation account says, “Genesis 1:14–19 (ESV)

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

In the psalm we see the author speak about the use of these elements made on day 4. God uses the moon and sun to govern time. They are to be used to see the seasons, for days, and years.

The passage speaks to how the moon and sun direct many things. When the beasts of the forest go creeping about, when the lions hunt for their prey or lay down, and when man goes to work.

God has placed these things in creation to direct our time and I think to remind us that we live in a world and are creatures of constant change.

The seasons change, the day changes, the clock is changing.

But the truth of all these elements we used to measure time and measure change is that they were all created by a God who doesn’t change and they are in their own special way a gracious gift from God.

When we think of the seasons there is a time to hunt and a time to go fishing. There is a time to have a picnic at the park and then a time to have a bonfire in the cold. Sometimes these happen all in the same day around here.

When we think about days of the week, there are days to work and then there are days to rest.

Or even when we think about one day, there is a time to get up and labor and time to lay down and rest.

God creates these parts of creation because he knows who we are and what we need and in his grace and love toward us he governs time in a way that is for our good and reminds us of his unchanging glory.

A Lord Who Sustains (24-30 | Day 5&6)

Verses 24-30 gives us some insight into the LORD who sustains.

Verse 24 seems like a stand alone verse where the psalmist gets excited in blessing the LORD and he says, *“O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”*

He becomes overwhelmed with all that is seen about God in his creation that he exclaims just how amazing his works are and praises his wisdom.

Power to Sustain

In the rest of the verses he shows that our LORD is one who sustains.

He mentions the sea in verse 25 and all the creatures who reside there, but also how it is used by mankind with ships, and lastly even how it is used by the Leviathan, which would have been a huge sea creature of some sort. Liken to a huge serpent or crocodile type animal.

But in verse 27 the author points out that all these creatures, including man, look to God for their food in due season.

God gives it and we gather it. He opens his hands and we are blessed with good things. This speaks to God's sustaining power in his creation to keep animals and mankind alive.

Power to Remove

It is also show that God has the ability to removed his sustain power from creation.

In verse 29 the language of God hiding his face is liken to removing his presence and power and God can “take away their breath” resulting in death and returning to dust.

From dust we were made, back to dust our bodies will go.

Seeing that the LORD has the ability to sustain life and remove it there is a sense of giving and taking away, which reminds me of the song, Blessed be Name.

The song reminds us that in times that are good or in times of bad, God's name should be blessed.

The first verses say this, *“In the land that is plentiful, where your streams of abundance flow, blessed be your name. When I'm found in the desert place, Though I want through the wilderness, blessed be your name.”*

Although we should be open to blessing the name of the LORD in all circumstances verse 30 shows us that the sin this death of this world will not last forever.

Power to Recreate

Verse 30 sets forth a glorious hope. It says, "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground."

This is the psalmist articulating his belief that there will be a resurrection and new creation. Death and dust will give way to life and vitality and a defiled world will give way to a new perfect one.

So not only does God sustain the broken world we live in today, but he will also sustain until he recreates it.

The word in verse 30 is the same Hebrew word found in Genesis 1 and in scripture this word meaning "to create" is only ever attributed to God, so here the psalmist has great insight as to how God, in the future would come to create again mankind and all of creation.

Illustration:

At the end of the book The Last Battle in the Chronicle of Narnia series, there is an amazing quote that speaks of this new creation.

Although we know this is fiction CS Lewis gives us a hopeful perspective as we look forward to this new creation.

"And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."

That sounds like an amazing day coming our way.

A Lord of Enduring Glory(31-35)

As we conclude our passage tonight verses 31-35 ends with us being reminded that God is the one who is to be glorified for creation and it is all his works.

Verse 31 points out that the LORD's glory will endure forever and how the LORD rejoices in his work, and we see this at the end of each creation day.

At the conclusion of each day of creation God looks at what he has made and says it is good, The creation God has given us is good.

Although sin has entered creation and the earth is under curse because of it, his creation is still good and still reflects his glory and goodness.

Verse 32 I think helps remind us that even as amazing and awe inspiring the creation we have is, there is still nothing compared to the power and awe that comes from God.

The earth trembles under the gaze of God and when his presence comes to the earth on a mountain, the mountain is scorched and smokes as we see on Mt. Sinai.

Our Response

Lastly, we see in verses 33-35 three reactions to have to this great, glorious, and creative God.

Have Songs of Praise

First we should respond in singing praise to God.

The passage in verse 33 says, “I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.”

For us to sing reminds ourselves and those around us of the great God that we serve. I am so encouraged on Sunday mornings when I am in the sanctuary and can hear others around me singing.

It is good for us to hear each other singing the truths of God’s word every week.

Illustration:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian during the WWII era said, “The Christ in [our] own hearts is weaker than the Christ in the word of other Christians.”²

What he is getting at is that there are many weeks where doubt, loss, sadness, fatigue, circumstances, or just a week of things not going right cause us to be discouraged in our faith and our following of Jesus, but when another Christian speak about Christ in encouragement it helps us so much.

One main way other believers speak Christ to each other is through singing, so let us sing when we get the chance to sing in praising God.

Have Joyful Meditations

Next, in verse 34 it says, “May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.”

Another response to God’s glory in creation is to have thoughts and meditations that are pleasing to Him.

² <https://crosslands.training/2021/08/the-gift-of-congregational-worship-part-two/>

This does not mean the Buddhist/new age practice of meditation where one tries to rid their mind of thought, but instead fill it with thoughts and ideas that are pleasing to God.

How are we do to this? By finding Joy in the LORD. The psalmist says his meditations will be pleasing to him, FOR I rejoice in the Lord. Ponder all the blessings and hope we have in the Lord and let that hope be a place of meditation unto the Lord.

Have Gospel Hope

Lastly, we can end our time in psalm 104 with gospel hope as we look at this last verse that seems out of place.

Verse 35 states, Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more! Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!"

This seems like a strange verse to end with, but we need to see that the author here is not vindictive or out to get sinner, but instead is fixated on God's glory.

Yet, he knows that those who sin against God and the wicked to not bring glory to God, so the author longs for a creation that is comprehensively restored.

And as New Testament believers, we know that God has sent is Son to do just that, even with those who are sinners and who are wicked.

2 Cor 5:17 tells us what the good news of Jesus does. It says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

Therefore, in the same way we can worship God because of his great creation we get to enjoy, we can also worship full of hope because of the recreation he is doing through Christ.

Lets pray and be dismissed.

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