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Sermon Notes

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Glory to God the Creator

Psalm 104

I. Meditating on God: Mutual Delight

vs. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

- Meditation... deep thinking about something; chewing something over, reflecting carefully on it; allowing its savor to fill the mouth of our mind with sweetness
- What do you fill your mind with? What occupies your thought life? What do you reflect deeply on?
- Your brain is amazingly complex... created by God for many purposes... but the highest purpose of all is to meditate on HIM

NOTE: the verse can be translated two ways:

KJV: *My meditation OF HIM shall be sweet*

“sweet” = pleasing, bringing pleasure to us

- What could be sweeter... more pleasing... than meditating on this topic: God Himself
- BUT most translations have it this way

vs. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

- Do your thoughts bring sweetness, pleasure to the eternal God?
- MUTUAL PLEASURE: pleasing to him AS I rejoice in the Lord... He is pleased while I rejoice
- What is the topic of my joy, my rejoicing: “IN THE LORD”!!!

A. Founder’s Conference Topic: The Doctrine of God

Three categories for which God may be praised

1. His nature and attributes

2. His past actions, including creation

3. His future promises

B. Our original purpose: Investigating the glory of God

1. God created us to wonder at Him and be amazed at His glory

2. God created us in His image with the capacity to meditate on His person and His achievements, including creation

3. God created the universe as a display of His nature and power

Illus. John Calvin called the physical universe “The theater of His glory”

a. God wove His glory into every single created thing... every leaf or pine needle, every deep sea creature and creepy crawly insect, every majestic soaring bird or strange awkward running beast in the Australian outback... all of it testifies to God’s glory

b. the earth is already filled with God’s glory

[the serphim continually cry to each other] *Isaiah 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

c. God wants more than that... he wants the world filled with the KNOWLEDGE of His glory

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Salvation enables this... by transforming our minds through the blood of Jesus Christ, the indwelling Spirit, and the perfect word of God, God has enabled us to stroll through this universe and say “This is my Father’s world...”

We can fill the world with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord

C. God’s pleasure, our pleasure

1. As we meditate on God, we bring pleasure to Him... at last we are doing that for which we were originally created

2. As we look at the universe and wonder at it, and give honor and praise to God for it, we are using the universe for what IT was created

3. And we bring joy and pleasure to ourselves!!!

Let's do that together!!!

D. Focus here: God the creator and sustainer of the universe

II. God the Creator and Re-Creator

A. The Structure of Psalm 104

Day 1: Light	Psalm 104:2a
Day 2: Waters above/below	Psalm 104:2b-4
Day 3: Water separated from land Vegetation and trees	Psalm 104:5-9 (also 10-13?) Psalm 104:14-17 (also 18?)
Day 4: Timekeeping lights in heavens	Psalm 104:19-23 (also 24?)
Day 5: Creatures of sea and air	Psalm 104:25-26 (sea creatures only)
Day 6: Animals and man [Food for all living creatures]	Psalm 104:21-24 Psalm 104:27-30

B. God's Ongoing Providence

1. Most of the Psalm speaks in present tense... what God does NOW
 2. BUT backdrop is original creation as we have seen
 3. God provides constantly for His creation
- God provides every living creature what it needs daily for its survival: fresh water, nourishment, a place to dwell
 - God does this day after day

C. Re-creation: Upholding and Sustaining

1. The psalm speaks poetically about God's sustaining work in creation

vs. 30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

2. The New Testament openly speaks of the power of God in sustaining the universe constantly

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Colossians 1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

If God through Christ did not constantly hold the universe together, the very atoms that make it up would fly apart. God constantly sustains the universe by His powerful word

Psalm 104 speaks directly about God's constant activity every day in ruling His creation

Here we see God ruling over

- Weather (vs. 3-4): the clouds and the wind
- Earth (vs. 5)
- Oceans (vs. 6-9)
- Mountains and valleys (vs. 8)
- Thirsty wild donkeys (vs. 11)
- Thirsty cedars (vs. 16)
- Storks which nest in high branches (vs. 17)
- Mountain goats and rock badgers (vs. 18)
- Sun and moon (vs. 19)
- Prowling lions and massive whales... both hungry and he feeds them all (vs. 21, 25-26)
- Man... who tills the ground and whose heart is gladdened and whose face shines with what he provides

Now... let's look at this magnificent Psalm in detail

III. The Whole Earth is Full of His Glory

A. God's Glory in Self-Revelation [Light]

1. God's greatness the theme... note also personal relationship... MY GOD

2. Light reveals God's greatness in so far as it reveals His creation

vs. 2-3 *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*

- a. the light of the sun reflects off the glistening sea, the beautiful fall foliage, the soaring eagle and the face of your spouse and proclaims the glory of God
- b. the light also shines from distant supernova and proclaims the immense power of God
- c. God wraps himself in a cloak of light to display His nature in part

3. BUT Light conceals God in so far as He is holy and separate above His creation

Immortal Invisible God Only Wise

In Light Inaccessible Hid from our eyes

Most blessed most glorious the Ancient of Days

Almighty victorious thy great name we praise

Great Father of Glory pure Father of light

Thine angels adore thee all veiling their sight

All praise we would render, O help us to see

'Tis only the splendour of light hideth thee

2 Corinthians 5:7 *We live by faith, not by sight.*

3. We cannot survive a full revelation of God's glory

1 Timothy 6:15-16 *God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*

[to Moses] **Exodus 33:20 *"you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."***

Jesus Christ is the light of God's perfect revelation to us:

John 1:4-5 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

B. God's Glory in Immensity [Expanding Universe]

Five times in four verses this truth is taught

vs. 2 he stretches out the heavens like a tent

Job 9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens

Isaiah 40:22 He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

Jeremiah 51:15 "He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

NOTE: in four of the five, the present tense is uses... "He stretches..."

1. Physicists speak of the expanding universe

Edwin Hubble, 1929, discovered that the universe is expanding... the further away a galaxy is from the Milky Way, the faster it appears to recede... this was confirmed by experoment on the red shift phenomenon—distant stars seemed to have a reddish tint to their light

2. 1990: The Hubble space telescope seems to give evidence that the universe is flying apart at immense speeds
3. Space itself is spreading out

Illus. The "firmament" in Genesis 1:6 derives from a Hebrew word related to the smoothing of a blacksmith's hammer as he spreads out a sheet of metal ever thinner and wider

4. The immensity of space PROCLAIMS the greater immensity of God

Hubble space telescope gives evidence of the immense distance to the farthest visible star

Estimates place the universe at as much as 100 billion light years across

Immensity shown **BY CONTRAST WITH KNOWN OBJECTS...**

[Illus. Tour of the Capitol dome... tour guide said Statue of Liberty could fit inside it]

Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

C. God's Glory in Sovereignty [Weather, Angels] (vs. 3-4)

vs. 3-4 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.

1. God rules over weather: awesome hurricanes, gentle breezes
 - a. every movement of the wind is under the direct control of God

Calvin: God rides on the clouds and is carried upon the wings of the wind, inasmuch as he drives about the winds and clouds at his pleasure... By these words we are taught that the winds do not blow by chance, nor the lightnings flash by a fortuitous impulse, but the God, in exercise of His sovereign power, rules and controls all the agitations and disturbances of the atmosphere.

Two-fold application: negatively, all destructive weather patterns should cause us to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand... "We ought to tremble under these scourges of Providence"

Positively: we ought to thank God for His grace with every pleasant gently cooling breeze

Illus.: Awesome power of hurricane in Massachusetts

2. Also rules over angels
 - a. Hebrews 1 quotes this, ascribes it to angels

Hebrews 1:7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

Angels in Isaiah 6 called "seraphim"... burning ones

- b. angels are instantly ready to do God's commands
- c. likened to physical creation as it stands ready also to obey God's every whim

D. God's Glory in Stability [Earth]

vs. 5 He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.

1. Earth pictured as completely stable, set on immovable pillars
2. Critics point to this as some of the foolishness of ancient poets... no sense in looking for science here

Earth revolves on its axis at 1050 miles per hour; hurtles through space around the sun at 1100 miles per minute; the sun moves through the galaxy at 150 miles per second

3. YET the surface of the earth is a solid foundation which will endure until the end of the world

Plate tectonics aside, the earth's mantle is a solid platform for the continents

Humor: friend who started a society for the prevention of continental drift!! Completely beyond human power to affect it in any way!!!

4. So solid that Jesus likens it to His word

Matthew 7:24-25 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

5. The earth is stable and solid... man has not the power to move it or remove it

6. BUT GOD CAN!!! AND HE WILL!!!

Hebrews 1:10-12 *"In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹² You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."*

Revelation 20:11 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.*

E. God's Glory in Power [Oceans, Smoking mountains] (vs. 6-9)

1. God controls the oceans totally
2. There is more than enough water to cover the earth... it already has once
3. BUT the oceans are limited by the command of God:

"Thus far and no farther!!!"

vs. 6-9 *You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. 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. ⁹ You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.*

4. The "deep" = ocean... average 2 miles deep

The deep comprises 97% of the space available for inhabitation by living creatures on earth... totally dwarfs the thin veneer of dry land and air for birds

"abyss" comes from *abyssos* (Greek) means "without bottom"

Illus. In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan, in the process of leading the first ships to circumnavigate the globe, attempted to sound the depths of the central Pacific ocean; he spliced six lengthy

lines together and attached them to a cannonball; he lowered the cannon ball until the line ran out... 400 fathoms or about 2400 feet. He concluded the ocean immeasurably deep... literally “unfathomable” At that place in the Pacific, he would have probably needed as many as 50 lines spliced together to hit bottom

5. God gathers the deep in jars!!!

Psalm 33:7-8 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.

NOTE: Hugenberger used this to prove the flood of Noah was local not worldwide... BUT there’s no clear indication in this verse that this does not refer to the boundary being set after the flood of Noah

Also, if the flood was not universal, how could it prevail upon the earth for 150 days above the highest mountains? If the flood was not universal, why build an ark?

6. ALSO... God’s power seen in volcanic activity

vs. 32 “He who looks at the earth and it trembles; who touches the mountains and they smoke.”

Most volcanoes are under the sea... much seismic activity also... but we also see it in volcanic eruptions all over the globe;

1880’s Krakatoa in the Pacific blew its top and filled the entire atmosphere of the earth with soot for weeks; the sound was heard on the coast of Chile over 6000 miles away

The awesome power of God seen in the immeasurable deep and his ability to cause the surface of the earth to writhe and smoke

F. God’s Glory in Provision [Fresh water, growing things] (vss. 10-30)

The GOODNESS of God in caring for every creature that He’s made

Summary vs. 27-28 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.

Provision of nourishment... proper working and resting place... work

1. Nourishment: fresh water and food

God knows salt water will not sustain land based vegetation, animals, or birds

They must have sweet water, so he provides it for them day after day

vs. 10-13 *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.*

Rain by John Piper: “The sky picks up a billion pounds of water from the sea, takes out the salt that would kill the crops, forms the water into tiny drops by gathering them around dust particles 1 ten thousandth of a centimeter wide, carries the billion pounds of water three hundred miles inland, and dumps it on a farm. “Well, it doesn’t exactly dump it. If it dumped a billion pounds of water on a wheat farm it would crush and destroy the wheat... so the sky dribbles the water out in droplets big enough not to evaporate and they fall several miles through the atmosphere but small enough not to crush the wheat stalks.”

Fresh water absolutely essential for life flows just where God commands it... not too much, not too little... all of it for the satisfaction of the earth, for our God is a good and loving King

Vs. 14 He makes grass grow for cattle...

vs. 16 The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

Illus. Trees have an amazingly efficient pumping system from their roots... a 100 foot birch may have as many as 200,000 leaves which give off as much as 900 gallons of water every summer day... all of that and more must be replaced by the pumping power of the tree and its roots

Every drop of water must be supplied to the tree by the root hairs, beginning the upward journey of water passed from cell to cell like a fireman’s bucket brigade

Even grass, which he provides for cattle to eat, is amazingly complex... grass, the ultimate symbol of our mortality... here today and tomorrow thrown in the fire; grass has an amazingly complex root system that can total over 400 miles in length with as many as 14 billion root hairs... every root hair absorbing water and minerals from the soil and filtering out harmful substances

FOOD for each... grass for cattle, plankton for whales, prey for lions, harvested and cultivated plants for man

2. Proper place

vs. 17-18 There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the pine trees. The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the coney.”

Each species has its proper habitat... “Foxes have holes, birds of the air have nests”...

Coneys = rock badgers = extremely timid, dwell on rocky ledges, able to subsist on moisture from lichen and moss

3. Satisfaction (joy)

vs. 28 *“When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things...”*

vs. 15 *“Wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.”*

NOTE: only man manufactures things from raw materials... cattle simply chew the grass as it grows; each of the tree items mentioned in vs. 3 are manufactured by a scientific process; wine comes from grapes fermented; oil is pressed and filtered; bread comes from grain ground, mixed, and cooked

BUT it all comes from God’s gracious provision; and it all shows the goodness of God

G. God’s Glory in Creativity [Vegetation, Animals]

Vs. 24-25 *“How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small*

1. Variety of species is incredible
2. Variety of scale... immense and insignificant...

Giant squid reach to over 60 feet in length; animal plankton are microscopic

3. Deep sea only beginning to be explored... overwhelming majority of living creatures still hidden there waiting to be discovered

H. God’s Glory in Order [Proper place and time]

Vs. 19 *“The moon marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down.”*

1. Sun, moon know their proper place and time
2. Lions know their proper place and time
3. Man comes out and does his work
4. BUT man’s highest work is contemplating His maker

vs. 26 *“There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan which you formed to frolic there.”*

Illus. Whale watch from Nantucket

The sea teems with abundant living creatures... man makes ships to go out and see them, or at least some of them

Ships prove that man's proper place is literally all over this globe... we climb the heights and observe the mountain goats and rock badgers in their habitat... and we give glory to God

We climb the pine trees and look at the stork's nests... and give glory to God

I. God's Glory in Death and Renewal [Animal terror, seasons]

Vs. 29-30 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

1. Every creature... including man... totally dependent on God for its moment by moment existence "God glorified in man's dependence"
2. God gives life... God also has power to take it away
3. Food chain itself based on this principle...
4. HUMAN DEATH is unique... it entered through Adam's sin; but basic metabolism functions at every level through one species laying down its life for the benefit of another
5. God sends forth His Spirit to recreate animal and vegetable life... the seasons come and go
6. How much more does God send forth His Spirit to regenerate people who trust in Christ as Savior

IV. Application: Living to Praise God the Creator

- God's Glory in Stability [Earth]
- God's Glory in Power [Oceans, Smoking mountains]
- God's Glory in Provision [Fresh water, growing things]
- God's Glory in Creativity [Vegetation, Animals]
- God's Glory in Order [Proper place and time]
- God's Glory in Death and Renewal [Animal terror, seasons]

A. Worship

1. Created to Praise
2. Redeemed to Praise
3. Stimulated to Praise
 - a. stimulated from within

vs. 1 “Praise the Lord, O my soul”

Sometimes you have to provoke yourself to do the very thing that you were created and redeemed to do... you have to talk yourself into praising God

This is the very role of the Holy Spirit... prompting us to worship constantly through Christ

- b. stimulated from without (by creation itself)

Vs. 24 “How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all

4. Committed to Praise

vs. 31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works

vs. 33 “I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.”

B. Witness

1. Without Jesus Christ as our redeemer, we will NEVER praise God properly
2. Our primary role is to witness to God the Redeemer, based on the prior work of God the creator
3. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the physical world to live and die as our Savior
4. Without this salvation, we will constantly suppress the truth of creation in unrighteousness
5. BUT with Christ as our Savior, we can see the creation properly and use it as a starting point for evangelism

C. Winnowing

Vs. 35 May sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.

1. Unredeemed sinners can NEVER see creation properly
2. They are the RUIN of this majestic creation

- a. because of sin, the created world has been CURSED...subjected to futility
- b. because of sin, even the cursed world itself is ruined through human greed, foolishness, and selfishness

Revelation 11:18 “The time has come for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

- 3. Until the wicked who will not repent are winnowed from the earth, this creation will groan
- 4. BEST is if they would repent and become those who will worship in spirit and truth!!

D. Waiting

Hebrews 1:10-12 “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment they will be changed; but you remain the same and your years will never end.”

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...