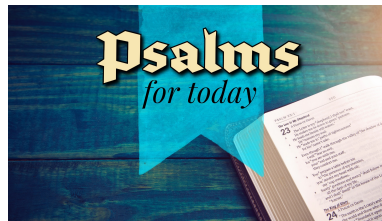


Psalms for Today: Psalm 104

Psalm 104



We come today to what was meant to be the natural conclusion to this series on Psalms.

We started off with Psalm 23, a Psalm that gave us the image of the Lord as our shepherd – protecting, healing, and guiding us to the land where we can dwell in peace with Him.

We then went to another well-known passage, the 46th Psalm. In that message, we learned that through our fiercest storms, though we are tempted into frantic action, we are called to stillness and the assurance that God remains God.

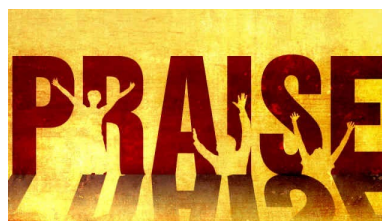
The next two weeks were more difficult. We looked at the 88th Psalm, which was filled with images of death, and despair, and terrible grief. But we learned that even this honest and heart-felt cry to God was an act of praise.

And then last week, Psalm 137. It was one of the more difficult sermons I've prepared so far because of the terrible imagery involved. But it still showed us more of the full image of God: that wrath and judgment are His and His alone, and we can trust in building our spiritual foundation on His promises.

After four weeks of walking through the Psalms, we've covered a lot of topics – some reassuring, some distressing. Where does that leave us for today?

And remember – today is also Pentecost! It's the birthday of Christ's church. It's the day the Holy Spirit was made known, that the Advocate Christ talked about arrived in a miraculous way.

Our journey through Psalms with the ups and downs that presented us – our journey from Lent to Easter to Pentecost with the ups and downs that represented – I think both leave us on one natural place: praise.



Praise is our theme today!

Psalms reminds us that when we know our Shepherd leads us, when we know God is God, when life just hurts too much, when we need to stand on and trust in God's promises in the darkest times...there is always reason for praise.

Whether we are reminded that our God walked among us and walked our path, or that we're reminded that He had to be betrayed and crucified, or that He defeated death, or that He did send this Holy Spirit to work among and through us...there is always reason for praise.

Our Psalm today is the 104th Psalm. It's a beautiful Psalm of praise.

As we read this Psalm together, I have a request of you – and this is where those red pieces of paper in your bulletin come into play. So get them ready.

There are many images in this Psalm of the things God has done and the things God continues to do. There are even references to the winds and the flames doing His work (which is very relevant today).

What I would like you to do is to listen and read along silently, and when something in this Psalm pulls at your heart and causes you to want to praise God, I want you to write it down.

If something in here sparks a thought that is more personal to your own life, that's great! Write it down.

If there's more than one, excellent! Write them down.

That is your praise to God today. Our goal is for everyone in here to have a red piece of paper with a praise to God written on it.



So let's now read together the 104th Psalm:

¹ Praise the Lord, my soul.

*Lord my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and majesty.*

*² The Lord 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 watery depths 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.
- 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 sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.
- ¹³ He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
- ¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:
- ¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their hearts.
- 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 junipers.
- ¹⁸ The high mountains belong to the wild goats;
the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.
- ¹⁹ He made the moon to mark 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 people go out to their work,
to their labor until evening.*

*²⁴ How many are your works, 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 Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.*

*²⁷ All creatures 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 ground.*

*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.*

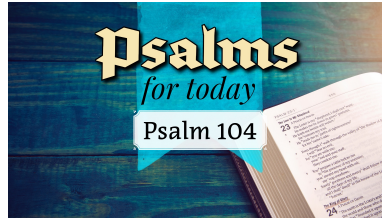
*³³ I will sing to the Lord all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.*

*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, my soul.

Praise the Lord.



God has done so, so much – and not just for us, but for all of His creation.

And the funny part is, we don't even think about most of it.

How often, as we see the clouds or hear the wind or are warmed by the sun, do we realize those are proclaiming the glory of our God?

How often, as we move about our day, do we think that God has given us the ground as something to live on?

How often, as we are striving for everything we need in life, do we forget that God has set up this creation that feeds and waters all of its inhabitants.

Today is that day when I think we need to stop, to pause, and to praise God – and not let anything get in the way of doing that.

A boy was sitting on a park bench holding an open Bible, and he was just praising God as loud as he could: "Wow! Wow! God is great!" He didn't care who heard him and who didn't.

Along came a man who had recently completed some studies at a local university. Knowing that his study had brought him all the truth and enlightenment he'd need, he asked the boy why he was so happy.

The boy giggled a little bit, then added, "God can do anything! I just read that He opened up the Red Sea and led the whole nation of Israel right through the middle! Did you know that?"

The man chuckled almost condescendingly and sat down next to the boy. He began to try to open this kid's eyes to the "realities" of the miracles of the Bible. "That can all be very easily explained. Modern scholarship has shown that the Red Sea in that area was only 10-inches deep at that time. It was no problem for the Israelites to wade across."

The boy was stunned. His eyes went from the man back to the Bible laying open in his lap. The man, content that he had enlightened a poor, naive young child to the finer points of scientific insight, turned to leave.

He had barely taken two steps when he heard a commotion behind him. That boy began to rejoice and praise louder than before. The man turned and asked, "What now? What's going on?"

"Wow!" exclaimed the boy happily, "God is even greater than I thought! Not only did He lead the Israel right to where they could cross the Red Sea, He drowned the whole Egyptian army in 10 inches of water!"

Nothing, not even the skepticism of the world, was going to stop that kid from praising God.

Be like him. Don't let anything stop you from praising God.

If you find yourself walking through the darkest valley, praise God you have a Shepherd to lead you.

If the world around you is upended in chaos, be still and praise God for who He is.

If you are overwhelmed in trouble and your life feels near to death, praise God – even if that praise is just to go to Him in tears.

If you feel lost, like you're in a foreign land waiting on God to deliver you, praise God that you can build your spiritual home on the foundation of His promises.

Praise the Lord, my soul. Praise the Lord.

Wherever you find yourself today, praise God.

And all of God's people said...