

Psalm 104

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- [0 : 00] Well, thank you so much, Esther. And folks, let me encourage you to have that psalm open in front of you. It's so important that we have God's Word open in front of us, because it's His voice that we want to hear today.
- That's what the power is. And so let me just encourage you to have His Word open in front of you. So, Psalm 104, let's dive straight in. Put your hands up this morning if you watch Netflix.
- Watch Netflix. Okay, I don't know if you knew this. But back in May, Netflix for the first time released a list of its most watched shows that month.
- Now, just while we wait for the PowerPoint to come on, why don't you turn to your neighbour, see if you can have a guess what the most watched show in May on Netflix was. Okay, 10 seconds, and then we'll come back in.
- Okay, so, the most... I don't know if these guys are laughing, I don't know what they said up there. The most watched show on Netflix in May was Our Planet by David Attenborough.
- [1 : 02] Did anyone say that? A few of us said it? Wonderful. Anyone watched it? Who's watched it? Wonderful show. For those who don't know what I'm talking about, Our Planet is the most recent David Attenborough documentary that explores the different habitats and the different creatures of our world.
- So, I googled it this week and The Guardian said about it that this documentary leaves you boggling at the endless precision of the natural world. There you go, Guardian readers. Worth a watch, according to The Guardian.
- But it's not the first time, you might probably aware, it's not the first time David Attenborough has won an award for his work. Okay? 2017, his documentary, Blue Planet, was officially the BBC's most watched show.
- And last year, as the BBC celebrated its 96th birthday, controversially, I think you'll agree with me, that his programme, Planet Earth, rivaled Match of the Day for being voted the best BBC programme of all time.
- But I find that fascinating, do you not? I find it fascinating and extremely revealing of something we all know to be true. And it's that as human beings, we have a love affair with this planet that we call home.
- [2 : 22] Right? A love affair with this planet that we call home. Its complexities, just think about it, its complexities amaze us. I love that they're still finding animals on these programmes in our year, do you not?
- Its complexities amazes, its diversity captivates us, and its beauty inspires us. And we think to ourselves, to quote Louis Armstrong, what a wonderful world. What a wonderful world.
- Well, it's this wonderful world that this psalm, Psalm 104, is going to get us to think about today. And we're going to be asked to lift our eyes and take in the world that we see around us.

But here's the thing. The psalmist is going to go one step further than David Attenborough. So the psalmist isn't going to just ask us to observe creation and take it in.

The psalmist is going to ask us to listen to what creation is saying. Okay, here's the central thrust of this psalm. If you get one thing, get this, okay?

[3 : 24] That creation is speaking. Creation is speaking. You see, as our wonderful world, as it does its thing, in all its beauty, as it captivates us, it's telling us something about the God who made it.

You see, the God of the Bible is not a silent God. Okay? He's a God who has made himself known. And the Bible would say that God has made himself known in three ways.

Firstly, he's made himself known in his words. So we have the Bible. We have it. Amazingly, think about this. We have it in our own language. In our hands.

So we can read. We can open the scriptures. And we can know who this God is for ourselves. We can know what he's like. We can know what he's done for us. And amazingly, we can hear him speak to us.

Secondly, he's revealed himself most supremely in the person of his son, Jesus. In other words, you want to know what God is like. You look to the son, who is, as you probably heard in that Colossians reading, the exact representation of God the Father.

[4 : 34] So he's made himself known in his word. He's made himself known in his son. And thirdly, he's made himself known in this wonderful world, in creation. So as we look around at our wonderful world, as we take in its beauty, we can understand something of who this God is.

That's what we were just singing, wasn't it? If you remember the words on the screen, O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I see the stars.

I hear the rolling thunder, the power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my saviour God to thee, how great thou art, how great thou art.

Have you ever wondered where that hymn gets its inspiration from? It gets it from verse 1 of this psalm. Look at it with me. Okay? Bless the Lord, O my soul.

O Lord, my God, you are very great. Do you see it? And it's a sentiment that carries over straight on from verse 1 of Psalm 103. My soul, bless the Lord.

[5 : 41] The psalmist looks up and it's as if he's saying to himself, having a wee pep talk with himself, I do that now and again, saying, look at this. Brain, take this in and celebrate how good my God is.

Notice the personal pronoun there, my God. The psalmist rejoices because he knows the God who has made everything. It's his God. And you notice that that God is Israel's God.

Right? The word Lord there comes up five times in this psalm. So the psalmist is looking around and he's exclaiming to himself, my God's done this.

Right? My God's done this. Creation speaking, the psalmist is singing. The question for us this morning, whoever you are here today, whatever you think about this God, the question is, are you joining?

Are you joining? So creation speaking, what's it telling us? It's telling us three things. Firstly, and these are alliterating, so you'll remember, okay, it's firstly telling us about a mighty maker, verses one to nine.

[6 : 52] A mighty maker, verses one to nine. Come with me, verses one to nine. Look at how the Lord is described to us here. Let's glance over it. What is he described as being?

As being clothed with splendor and majesty. Of wearing a garment of light. That's what we were singing, wasn't it? Of the heavens being his upper chambers, of the clouds being his chariots, of the winds being his messengers, and of fire being his servant.

This is the Lord. And do you see all the verbs? All the verbs. Still remember a verb as being a doing word? That's how you remembered it in school, wasn't it?

A verb. Do you see all the verbs, right? He makes, he rides, he lays, he stretched, he covered, he set, he spoke, he assigned, he raised, he sank, he established.

That's a lot of verbs in nine verses. And it's a deliberate echo of Genesis one. We don't have time to do that. I would love to do that comparison between how Genesis one goes and how this psalm goes, and you'll see the connections if you want to go home and do it yourself.

[8 : 03] But this is a deliberate echo of Genesis one. See what's going on? The Lord has been described to us like a king. Just feel the language, like a king.

One who has all the power and one who has all the wisdom. And you have to say what a beautiful combination of attributes that is.

and that we see come gloriously together in the creation of the world. He did it. God did it.

And he loves it. He loves what he made. It's the picture, if you want to check it out, that we get in the Genesis account, isn't it? That God is like a master artist who, when he finished his greatest work, he sat back and he surveyed what he made.

And if God was Scottish, he would have gone, yeah, beauty. Right? Yes. What did he say? He says it is very good. Do you see how creation brings God satisfaction and glory?

[9 : 04] This is very good. So let me ask you here today, done that very quickly, let me ask you here today, whoever you are, what do you make of all that? There's a lot of questions come up there, isn't there, about the creation of the world.

But let me ask you, how do you account for the world? You know, comedian Frank Skinner, who from what I can tell has some kind of belief in God.

There's a story that I heard about him recently, about how he was having a debate with his friend who didn't believe that God created the world. And so they had a bit of back and forth chat, went on for a long, long time, and his friend turned to him and said, Frank, listen, do you want a cup of tea?

And Frank said, that would be lovely, thank you. So his friend went to the kitchen and put the kettle on. And he was so engrossed in this conversation that his friend came right back to see Frank, came right back into the conversation.

And the chat went back and forth a bit, bit more. And then all of a sudden in the kitchen, the kettle goes, and his friend says, listen, I need to go back into the kitchen, Frank, because that cup of tea won't make itself.

[10 : 16] And Frank said, why not? Just think about it. Think about it. Why not? You see, the psalmist is saying that God established the earth, that there's a first cause.

He did it. He did it. Our God, he did this. And what an awe-inspiring thought for the psalmist and for the Lord's people in this day who would have been surrounded by people worshipping all sorts of small g-gots, worshipping the sun, worshipping the moon, worshipping the sea, that the psalmist can shout to the world and say, hey, see our God.

He's the one who made the sun, the moon, and the sea. And so when it comes to any of you guys challenging me to a game of BC God-top trumps, let me tell you that Yahweh, let me tell you that the Lord is always going to win.

let me tell you how this challenged me this week. As I try and allow God's word to shape my soul, here's how it challenged me this week.

I don't know if you remember the Duracell batteries when we were young. The type that you squeeze at the top and the bottom and if you squeezed hard enough you could see how much power was left in the battery. Do you remember them? Yeah?

[11 : 32] Well, I don't know about you, but over the past season of life, see if you'd squeeze me, right? Squeeze me. Friends, you would have seen that I was extremely low in power. And I don't know if you find that in your own life, you've known that over the last season or you know that right now, that you're low in power.

But here's what I've asked myself this week, in those times, why is it, friends, that so often we live our lives, we run from thing to thing, we run from job to job, we run from task to task and not only do we massively overrate our own power as creatures, but we massively underrate God.

Because if you think about it, if by faith in Jesus Christ that this mighty maker is for us and he's one who we can call incredibly our good father, then what a reason we have to run to him and to trust and to pray.

So as you go home today, I want to challenge you, just take a leaf out of the psalmist book. Look at creation, just look at creation as you drive home, as you walk home, take it in. As you go up Blackford Hill, as you walk up Arthur's seat, as you look on the Pentlands, as you drive over the Fourth Road Bridge, I know where you live, right?

Take a minute to take stock of the fact that our God is not lacking in power. He's not lacking in power. Friends, creation is speaking.

[13 : 06] The question is, are we listening? Second thing it tells us is about a perfect provider. Now, if you come with me to verses 10 to 30, this is where we see this.

Now, there was an English philosopher called William Paley. Some of you might have heard of him. He came up with this analogy to describe the creation of the world and he said it was a bit like coming across a pocket watch lying on the floor.

And he was saying that logic would lead you to believe that that pocket watch hadn't just come out of nothing. There must have been someone that created it. It's a pretty decent stab at an analogy. But what happened is down the years people took that analogy and they used it to promote what is called deism, right?

So it's this idea that God wound the world up like a watch and then he stepped back, put it down and he's just let it run its course. He's not involved in the slightest. But if you come with me to these verses this psalm is telling us that the opposite is true.

It is telling us that the Lord is intimately and actively involved day after day after day after day in lovingly caring for his creation. Right?

[14 : 15] Here is this God. He is not just the God of the big picture of life. He is the God who cares about the small details of life. Again, see the present tense verbs, what does the Lord do?

Present tense, he causes. Do you see it? Verse 10 and 14. He causes water to flow and the grass to grow. He waters the mountains.

Verse 13. He makes both the sun and the moon rise and set. Verse 14. He gives food to his creatures. Verse 20. Does this strike you as a God who isn't actively involved in lovingly caring for his creation?

Not a bit. God cares. And do you see who benefits from this loving care? The birds, verse 12. The sea creatures, verse 25. Verse 11.

The beasts of the field. And here is my favourite character in this psalm. If you check him out. The wild donkey. Do you see him? The wild donkey.

[15 : 18] Where is he? I should have written down there. Verse 11. The wild donkey. Picture the wild donkey in your head. Right? He's away out on the wilderness on his own. He is undomesticated.

He is scruffy. He is filthy. No kids running up to their mum saying mum, mum, mum, mum. Can we please, please, please, please, please, please have a wild donkey as a pet? He's not making it onto Blue Planet.

There's no funfair about this wild donkey. And yet do you see that God provides even for him? The animals benefit from God's care and this is where we come in.

Man does. Verse 14. The crops that we are able to grow, the ground that we are able to cultivate in verses 22 and 23. Think about this one tomorrow morning.

The work that we are able to do because the sun comes up. All of that finds its original source from the Lord's good hand. You know, our little girl Grace is dairy intolerant.

[16 : 23] And because of that, almost for the first time in my life, what I've started doing is checking the ingredients on the back of packets. I was doing it this week with a psalm in my mind and saying, thank you, Lord, for providing the sun and the rain and for giving the farmer the skills that he needs to cultivate that land so that we can have sunflower seed oil that could go in that flora tub that I could put on my little girl's toast and she could eat it.

Tracing things all the way back, aren't we, to our first source, first cause. This is what the psalm is asking us to do. I was challenged this week as well to develop my theology of grass cutting.

Went to cut the grass on Thursday night. I haven't done it for weeks and it was so long. Why was it so long? Because it rained and rained and rained and rained over the past few weeks and every time I went to cut it, I couldn't because it rained again.

But the rain fell and the sun came out and boy did that grass grow and I cut it and I filled two wheelie bins worth of grass. But God made that grass grow.

It is testimony to the fact that he lovingly cares for his creation. It's challenges, doesn't it, it's the everyday things that we do in life. How often does grace around the dinner table saying thanks just become a routine thing for us?

[17 : 45] We all fall into that, don't we? It gets stale at giving thanks. Friends, every glass of wine that you enjoy, every potato peeling that you scrape into the bin, parents, every nappy that you change is telling you something about the God who provides for the creatures of his world.

In the book of Acts, you see Paul, he's speaking to the people of this little town in Lystra who don't know about the God of the Bible. What does he do? He appeals to creation. Getting them to think about the how and the why that all the things happen.

He says this, God has not left himself without witness. He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons. He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.

In other words, Paul is saying if you look up, you'll understand that the God of creation is one who provides all the things that you need. It comes from his hand.

Would you understand? Take stock, stop in your life and think about what this is telling you. Friends, bring those wonderful two truths together. Mighty maker, perfect provider.

[18 : 53] This is who this God is. Incomparable power and incomparable love. And of course, we see both of these fully in the person of the Lord Jesus, don't we?

who stilled the seas. Do you see it? This blew my mind this week and then I realized it wasn't my thought. It was in my ESV study Bible but I thought it was mine. What does the psalmist write of God? Verse 7, that God did what?

He rebuked the water and it fled. And what does Mark write about Jesus as he was in the boat with his disciples? What did he do? He rebuked the seas, the wind and the waves and the still.

Same words. Mark helping us see that God is in the boat. This is who Jesus is. He's one of all power. And what do we see Jesus doing for the hungry crowd as he has compassion on them as they gather to hear him preach?

He miraculously provides bread for them to eat. Do you see in Jesus we have one who is a mighty maker and we have one who is this perfect provider. And as we read in Colossians, he is the one through whom all things were created.

[19 : 54] And he is the one who sustains all things with a word of his power. What a big Christ we have. Friends, creation speaking, the question is are we listening thirdly and finally?

Creation is telling us about a tragic truth. Verses 31 to 35, because in light of everything that we've seen, what does this God deserve? What does the Lord deserve?

The God who made everything, who provides everything and who rejoices in his work as he gains satisfaction from it, as it displays his majesty. What does he deserve? Do you see the words?

He deserves glory. He deserves glory from every creature. All creatures of our God and King lift up their voice and with us sing hallelujah. All of creation is supposed to praise this God, this holy God.

And so that our soul and creation's soul were singing praises to this God. That is what the psalmist is doing.

[20 : 57] Do you see verse 33? I will sing to the Lord. He's adding his voice to this. I will sing to the Lord all my life. I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him as I rejoice in the Lord.

This is why we were made. This was the creator's intention for all of us is his creatures. We would join in with the hallelujah chorus giving him glory and sharing in his glory. But here's the tragedy of verse 34.

What does the psalmist see and know? He knows that despite of what is obvious to them many people have willfully turned away from this God and will not recognize him as their creator.

It was a tragic truth then it's a tragic truth now it's a tragic truth today. Paul writes this in Romans 1.

for what could be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. Hear what he's saying. For God's invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

[22 : 08] So they are without excuse. For although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him but became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened claiming to be wise they became fools and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

And here is where we kick in on the screen. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

There is the tragedy that man the creature willfully wants to worship creation rather than the creator. Now the thing is the gods of our day they might have different faces to those of the first century fame, success, comfort, sex, money, career you take your pick but they represent the same defiant heart attitude that says I don't want anything to do with God.

And friends the thing is that God's righteous anger is hanging over all of us who have bought into that bad exchange and who are ignoring the truth about God and have chosen to buy the lie that he's not there.

And it's a tragic truth and it's a serious problem. But let me tell you about another kind of exchange. Let me tell you about God the Son let me tell you about Jesus who exchanged heaven's praises for birth in a stable who stepped into this creation who became a creature and who was crucified by the very creatures that he had made the utter humiliation of that and who hung on a cross who took God's anger on himself that defiant creatures like you and me deserve making a way for you and I by faith in him to be perfectly right with our creator and by doing so joining in this glorious harmony as creation and creature join in the worship of their creator.

[24 : 37] French creation is speaking the psalmist is singing the world is displaying the question is are we joining?

Just as we close there was a man called Thomas Chisholm some of you might have heard of him he lived in New Jersey and he became a Christian when he was 27 he suffered ill health most of his life starting when he was 36 in fact he had to come out of the Christian ministry that he entered for one year because of his ill health and he spent the rest of his life working a desk job selling life insurance I love that thought helping people make financial plans on the one hand and telling them about the God who created all things and sustains all things and provides all things on the other hand and he's the man who's famous for writing the hymn Great is thy faithfulness as he reflected on God's loving care his glory displayed in the world but his loving care for him friends I thought we would just close by singing it together I know the time is marching on but just singing this together it's a great way isn't it we did this a few weeks ago and so many of you came up to me and said it was it was so potent just a way of allowing God's word to dwell among us richly as we reflect on these truths so we'll give this a shot and as we always say if it flies great and if it doesn't we'll never talk about it again okay but think about what these words are saying to you this hymn that was written reflecting the

God who provides all these things okay how countless are your works Lord in wisdom you have made them all heavenly father thank you so much that you are this kind of God thank you so much and that we perfectly see that you are a mighty maker and you're a perfect provider we see it ultimately in your son Jesus Christ and so father I pray that you would help us as creatures to be those who look to our creator would you help us to find our all in all in Jesus Christ in whose name we pray amen