

Sunday April 24, 2022

## Lesson 8: Creation Meditation and Creator Worship

Scripture: Psalm 104

### **Context:**

As we continue into the Easter season, we start a new section of our spring curriculum. We have gone through the gospel of Mark and examined how God calls us to make a mark with our faith and in following Jesus. We now learn how to take the steps as disciples of Jesus and to learn of the spiritual disciplines to help us draw closer to God and respond in our daily lives. Our first lesson comes in learning to praise God as the creator of the universe and the call to honor God through adoration and good stewardship of creation, as found in Psalm 104.

Psalm 104 is primarily a psalm of praise and adoration of God. Yet a distinction of this psalm is the focus upon creation and God's role in creating and sustaining the natural world. The praise also includes a role for the psalmist as they both begin and end the psalm with the phrase "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This is like the format of the psalm before it, which speaks of God's steadfast love. The two psalms together praise the Lord as the savior who forgives and the creator who provides; both see their themes as expressions of the Lord's kingship.<sup>1</sup> The flow of the two together also provides a continuity of God's involvement with humanity and creation.

As one reads the psalm, there is almost a reintroduction of the book of Genesis. The psalmist creates a poem to describe the beauty of nature and identifies God as the one responsible for such mystery and awe. The psalm in some ways reads as a hymn to give thanks to God for such magnificent creation. The first part of the hymn portrays God as the sovereign creator.<sup>2</sup> God is personified as a royal deity, who lights up the world by doing things such as having a residence upon the water (vs. 2b, 3a), and then having control over the winds and lightning as his cohorts (vs.4) and doing things such as controlling the water (vs. 5,7). The life in the world depends on the reign of God.<sup>3</sup> This helps to set up the next section as the psalmist reflects on how this applies to God's relationship with humanity.

The next section of the hymn (vs. 10-29) expresses the delight of how humans are dependent on this same God. There is a beauty as how just as creation relies and depends on God, humans do the same and feel fed and renewed. There is a gratitude for creation and how there are glimpses of God's glory everywhere.

The closing section of the psalm (vs. 30 -35) makes observations about what this leads to for humans and for all of creation. With a series of wishes and vows, the psalmist names how humans are called to thank God for creation and for life.<sup>4</sup> Because God's breath flows into us, we are called to respond and praise the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Mays, James L. "Psalms," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 331.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 332.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 335.

## **Application**

I've always loved how Easter falls in the season of spring. Even if there is a frost or abnormal cold weather, there is usually a chance some type of blooms have emerged or some greenery has shot through. Where I live in south Alabama, one can see how the green comes and the blooms are there, both the domestic and the wild. All of it is beautiful and all of it seems to praise God.

One of the traditions my churches both commit to each Easter is the flowering of the cross. The congregation is invited to pick blooms and bring them to worship so in our opening act of praise, the people of God can come to offer something to the creator of the universe. As I watched the tradition this year, I thought of the beauty of how we take something from creation, which God made, and offer it back to God on the day of resurrection. It is a form of saying thank you for the one who has given us new life.

As we read this psalm, we are reminded of the grandeur and praise we are to give to God for the world around us. I think one of the ways we do so is through adoration and praising God. It can take formal tones as we see with worship and flowering a cross. Yet I have found it can come in other ways. One can get up for sunrise or watch the sunset and say, "thank you God" and marvel at the work in front of us. The same goes for looking at the moon and the stars as one shuts down the house at night with a quick look out the window or a step out on the porch.

Or another practice I've taken to is taking time to immerse myself in God's creation. While it's beautiful to do so on days off where one can go into the woods, out on the kayak, or a quick beach trip, it can come in everyday living. Sometimes when I have a long-to do list, meetings to plan, or articles or sermons to write, I get a nudge I need to clear my mind. And so, I step outside, gather my dog on his leash, and go for a walk. As I breathe in the fresh air and see the greenery with the blooms, I feel my soul being flooded with awe as I think of the Creator who made all these beautiful things. I feel refreshed and renewed, remembering how God created us to rest and be in awe of the world around us amid our human machinations.

Yet this psalm also makes clear while we are called to adore and praise God for the beauty of this earth as we enjoy it, we are also called to be good stewards of creation. So often it is easy to think solely of what we get out of creation and how we believe it was made for us to enjoy it. As we read the psalm though, we are also called to reflect on how to honor it and take care of what already belongs to God.

Just a few weeks ago, my community hosted a clean-up of the town and alongside the road leading into our community to prepare for the Easter weekend. I was struck by how quickly we filled up bags of litter thrown on the side of the road. There were cans, wrappers, and things which clearly had been cast out a window without a thought.

As we cleaned up, I felt convicted to think about how this is God's creation, and we are called to take care of it. God has given us a beautiful place to live and when we choose not to keep it clean or honor it, we are disrespecting God, the very one who has given us life. Our actions and what we do to this earth matters. As our psalmist reminds us, our very souls are tied to God, and this means they are also connected to the world God has created. One of our hymns of praise should include looking for ways to replenish God's earth and to take care of it as best as we are able.

How do you feel called to appreciate creation and how do you take opportunities to do so? What are practices of adoration you participate in to give thanks for God as the creator of the universe? What are the local opportunities for you to participate in stewardship and help preserve and protect God's creation? How can you be a better steward of God's creation in your daily

life? What things would you add to the psalmist's list of where you see the grandeur and majesty of God?

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