

August 10, 2008 by Steve Brandon



The Greatness of God on the Earth

Psalm 104

1. Earth (verses 5-9).
2. Water (verses 10-13).
3. Vegetation (verses 14-15).
4. Habitation (verses 16-26).
5. Dependence (verses 27-30).

We are continuing this morning what we began last week. Last week I preached a message entitled, "The Greatness of God in the Stars." The premise of my message came in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God." We looked at the vastness of the universe in which we live. It's unbelievable. We looked at the number of the stars that God has set in place and named. It's incalculable. We looked at the power of God to create the universe with seemingly no effort at all, merely speaking it into existence. It's unfathomable. My aim was to blow your mind away with the incredible awesomeness of God. My aim was to convince you that we cannot comprehend how great God is.

I finished my message by considering Psalm 103:11, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him." Just as we cannot comprehend the greatness of the universe, so it is with God's grace. We cannot comprehend how great God's love is. Ultimately, His love was put on display for us at the cross of Christ.

After I finished preaching, we had an extended time of worship in song. How can you not respond in any other way, but in worship of God, once you have heard and thought and understood and believed the things that were spoken last week? You can't. Everything within us ought to bubble over in praise to our great Savior.

This week, we are continuing on with the same spirit. But, rather than looking merely to the heavens, which are far, far away, we will be looking to the earth. My message is entitled, "The Greatness of God on the Earth." My message this week may not be quite spectacular as last week was. But, if properly understood, it ought to give us no less reason to marvel at the greatness of God.

I don't know if you realize this or not, but just as the heavens are filled with the wonder and majesty of God, so also is the planet upon which God has placed us. Perhaps you remember the scene where Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted. He saw six seraphim, who were flying around the throne of God. They were calling out to one another saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The whole earth is full of His glory! The heavens are telling of the glory of God. So also is the earth telling of the glory of God.

This morning, as we consider the greatness of God, we will be looking to the marvels the earth, which God has created for us. After my message this morning, we will again have an opportunity to sing His praise in song. To guide our thoughts this morning, we will be using Psalm 104.

This Psalm is all about God's care for those who live on the earth, both man and beast. God has created an environment in which we can live and move and have our being (Acts 17:24). He has also created this world so that we can thrive and grow. The reason we can take a breath this morning is because God has given us not a body that can breath, and a place where we can obtain the oxygen that we need. The wonders of creation are an expression of the greatness of God.

Let's consider the words of Psalm 104.

Psalm 104
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,
Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain.
He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;
He makes the clouds His chariot;
He walks upon the wings of the wind;
He makes the winds His messengers,
Flaming fire His ministers.
He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever.
You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains.
At Your rebuke they fled,

At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.
 The mountains rose; the valleys sank down
 To the place which You established for them.
 You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
 So that they will not return to cover the earth.
 He sends forth springs in the valleys;
 They flow between the mountains;
 They give drink to every beast of the field;
 The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;
 They lift up their voices among the branches.
 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;
 The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.
 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
 And vegetation for the labor of man,
 So that he may bring forth food from the earth,
 And wine which makes man's heart glad,
 So that he may make his face glisten with oil,
 And food which sustains man's heart.
 The trees of the LORD drink their fill,
 The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,
 Where the birds build their nests,
 And the stork, whose home is the fir trees.
 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
 The cliffs are a refuge for the shephanim.
 He made the moon for the seasons;
 The sun knows the place of its setting.
 You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
 In which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.
 The young lions roar after their prey
 And seek their food from God.
 When the sun rises they withdraw
 And lie down in their dens.
 Man goes forth to his work
 And to his labor until evening.
 O LORD, how many are Your works!
 In wisdom You have made them all;
 The earth is full of Your possessions.
 There is the sea, great and broad,
 In which are swarms without number,
 Animals both small and great.
 There the ships move along,
 And Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it.
 They all wait for You
 To give them their food in due season.
 You give to them, they gather it up;
 You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
 You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
 You take away their spirit, they expire
 And return to their dust.
 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
 And You renew the face of the ground.
 Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;
 Let the LORD be glad in His works;
 He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
 He touches the mountains, and they smoke.
 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
 I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
 Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
 As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.
 Let sinners be consumed from the earth
 And let the wicked be no more
 Bless the LORD, O my soul
 Praise the LORD!

One of the first things that you notice about this Psalm is that it begins with praise and it ends with praise. Verse 1 reads, "Bless the LORD, O my soul!" Verse 35 reads, "Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!" And if you pay attention, you can see that scattered throughout this Psalm, there are sporadic calls to praise. In verse 24, we read, "O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions" (or creations as some translations say). Down in verse 33 we see something similarly, "I will sing to the

LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to y God while I have my being." For this reason, it will be very appropriate for us to finish our time in the word this morning with an extended time of worship in song, because all of the things mentioned in this Psalm give us reason to praise the Lord.

One of the great reasons why it is appropriate for us to praise the Lord is because of His greatness. Look again at verse 1, "Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great;" This is the theme of my message this morning. "O LORD my God, You are very great!" Right from the start, this Psalm speaks of the greatness of God, which is put forth in the first four verses.

Verse 1 finishes with these words, "You are clothed with splendor and majesty." When you awoke this morning, you had an opportunity to dress yourself, what sort of clothes did you put on? Being Sunday morning, I'm sure that you didn't put on your painting clothes. You put on something nice and neat. Perhaps you spent some time ironing your clothes last night. But, however nicely you clothed yourself, you didn't cloth yourself as God is clothed. God is clothed "with splendor and majesty."

As a king is clothed with long flowing robes and diamond studded crowns, it speaks of the greatness of His position. So also is God clothed in such a way that causes us to see His greatness.

Verse 2 continues the theme of God's appearance. "Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak." Often when the Bible describes the appearance of God, we are flooded with imagery of light. Paul says that God "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16). The writer to the Hebrews says, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). When Daniel saw the Lord in a vision, he said, "I kept looking until the thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow. And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were burning fire" (Dan. 7:9). When Ezekiel saw his vision of the Lord, he said, "In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lighting was flashing from the fire" (Ex. 1:13). When the apostle John was enabled to see into the throne room of God, he said, "Out from the throne came flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder" (Rev. 4:5).

This is how God often appears to us -- as a blazing fire of blinding light! So also in verse 2 of this Psalm, "Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak." Whatever it means when you strip away the metaphor, it all points to the greatness of God. Nobody enters into the presence of God without being unaffected by His greatness.

We see further exclamations of His greatness in the last half of verse 2 through verse 4, "Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind; He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers." These verses move from the heavens to the clouds to the winds to God's servants. Now, it's difficult to dissect these words and fully understand each of them in all their detail, as they are poetic in nature. Yet, they are clearly describing God's greatness. God is so great that He merely extends the heavens as we do the canvas of a tent. God is so great that He rides upon the clouds, using the winds to carry His chariot along the heavenly countryside. God is so great that the winds and fire are tamed by Him to accomplish His purposes.

As we consider these verses, we can easily say, "O LORD my God, you are very great" (as verse 1 says). And indeed, the rest of the Psalm is focused upon God's greatness as well. However, the rest of the Psalm is a bit different than these first four verses. Verses 1-4 focus directly upon God and describe Him (and His resulting greatness). Verses 5-35 direct our attention upon the way in which God has designed the earth so as to function as our provision in this life. You could call verse 24 a theme verse of the Psalm, "...O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions."

My aim this morning is to focus our attention upon the wonders of the earth and thereby demonstrate for you the greatness of the Lord. Let's look at my first point, ...

1. Earth (verses 5-9).

Verse 5 begins, "He established the earth upon its foundations, so that it will not totter forever and ever."

When you think about the marvels of the way in which God created the earth, you can only marvel at His greatness. When God created the earth (on the first day of creation), He created it in such a way that it wouldn't shake or vibrate. It's perfectly symmetrical. The earth doesn't wobble when it spins. It spins smoothly and securely.

Furthermore, when God created a planet for us to live on, He placed it perfectly in our solar system to be able to sustain life. We aren't too close the sun, which would be too hot for life. We aren't too far away from the sun, which would be too cold for life. Rather, we are in a region, some 92-94 million miles away from the sun which is perfect for life.

When God placed the earth in the solar system, He gave us the right tilt (23½ degrees). If it was tilted more, we would find the summers to be too hot and the winters too cold. If the earth was tilted less, the equator would be too hot and the poles would be too cold. The tilt of planet earth is perfect for life.

When God placed the earth in the solar system, He gave us the moon, to give the oceans a tide, which keeps them from stagnating, which help to keep the shorelines clean. When God placed the earth in the solar system, He gave us a magnetic field, which protects us from the harmful radiation that comes from the sun. In fact, it is this magnetic field interacting with solar flare-ups that are the cause of the Northern Lights phenomenon.

The marvels of the earth are many. If God had created the earth any differently, we would not be able to live upon it.

Verses 6-9 describe the way that God has given us land to live upon. Without land, we couldn't have life as we know it. But, God made sure

that we would have land on which we might dwell. Look at what the Psalmist says in verses 6-9,

Psalm 104:6-9
You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
The waters were standing above the mountains.
At Your rebuke they fled,
At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.
The mountains rose; the valleys sank down.
To the place which You established for them.
You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
So that they will not return to cover the earth.

These words describe exactly what took place on the third day of creation. Initially, when God created the earth, it was covered with water (Gen. 1:1-8). But, on the third day, God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear" (Gen. 1:9). We get a bit more detail in Psalm 104. God gave word, and the mountains were lifted up and the valleys sank down. God drew a line in the sand, past which the waters were not permitted to go. In Job 38:11, we find out that God spoke to the waters saying, "Thus far you shall come, but no farther; and here shall your proud waves stop" (Job. 38:11).

God has created a place where we may dwell. It is perfectly suited for life. This is summed up well by the words of Isaiah 45:18, "He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited." (Is. 45:18). God was the Master-craftsman building a home for man.

But, it's not merely the structure of the earth that is needed for life. You need more. One of the most basic things that you need for life is water. This is my second point.

2. Water (verses 10-13).

As all of us know, water is important to all of life. Without water, we all would die. Each of us are 65% water. You can live for 40 days without eating anything. But, after 3 days without water, you may well die.

The reason why we can only live three days without water is because of the many functions that water performs in our bodies. Water helps to maintain your body temperature. When you are too hot, you perspire and the evaporation cools your body. Water helps to transport nutrients to your muscles. It also carries away waste. Just as we use water to clean the outside of our bodies, water within our bodies helps to carry away the toxins in our body. The presence of water is needed for many of the body's metabolic processes to take place. Without water being around, many of our bodily functions don't work. Perhaps what is most pertinent to us this morning concerning water is that because of its molecular structure, water is an excellent solvent. Thus, it can dissolve food and minerals, and carry these substances throughout your body.

As I was studying this week about the properties of water, I googled to find some information about water. Much of what I found was website after website that contained one message, "Drink more water!" This isn't anything new to me. I have heard this message a thousand times. You would think that I would have learned from this. It was about five years ago that I had a kidney stone. It was one of the worst and most awful experiences of all of my life. The pain is indescribable. I remember that it hit me on a Sunday evening. I remember where I was. I remember what I was doing. I went to the emergency room and was treated for it. The stone had to be removed eventually by surgery. After experiencing this kidney stone, I was told, "Drink more water!" For a while, I did pretty well on drinking more water. But, over the years, as the memory of the pain reduced in my mind, I haven't been drinking as much water as I should.

Well, yesterday evening, I experienced another kidney stone. I went to the emergency room last night. For a few weeks, I have been sensing that something wasn't quite right. Over the past few weeks, I have been drinking much water and lemonade the past few weeks. But, yesterday evening, as our family was out of town, something "dropped" and the pain in my lower back was incredible. I went to the hospital and was treated for the pain. As I was planning on preaching this morning, I requested some non-narcotic drugs to help me.

Last night I was up some 5-6 times in an effort to wash the kidney stone away. I imagine that I will be up again several times tonight as well. At all times, it's important to drink much water, and especially for me at this time. The water helps to carry away minerals in your body, which can store up and precipitate to form a kidney stone. So, the moral of the story? "Drink more water."

Anyway, the chemical properties of water are amazing. When it freezes, it expands, unlike most fluids. This means that in the winter time, ice will float, allowing the fish to continue to live in the lakes. If ice would sink, it would be disastrous for the ecosystem of ponds and lakes. Also, the specific heat of water is relatively high. That means it takes a lot of heat to raise the temperature of water. The impact of this is that water is good for keeping steady temperatures (hot or cold). Water is also a good cooling agent, as it can take away much heat.

Further, the molecular structure of water is important for its function. Water is H₂O, two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. These atoms form together in the shape of a "V" which make the molecule to be a polar molecule. The oxygen side has a negative electrical charge, while the hydrogen side has a positive electrical charge. And so, it is able to dissolve compounds composed of electrically charged building blocks, such as salt. The presence of other hydrogen atoms in other water molecules allow the water molecules to loosely bond together, keeping water a liquid over a fairly large range of temperature.

You remove any of these characteristics of water, and life as we know it would not exist. But in His greatness God designed the water to be this way. Such design is a manifestation of His goodness to us. God has created water with these properties to provide for us. He has also made the earth in such a way that water is plentiful and abundant for all of His creatures. That's what verses 10-13 summarize for us.

Psalm 104:10-13
He sends forth springs in the valleys;
They flow between the mountains;
They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;
They lift up their voices among the branches.
He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.

These verses are talking about fresh waters. Though the earth is covered with water, much of it is salt water, which isn't able to sustain us because of its high mineral content. But, these verses demonstrate how God has fresh water for his creatures. The springs provide the water for the rivers that flow between the mountains. As these rivers distribute themselves over all the earth, the animals upon the earth are given the water that they need to carry on with their lives. From the domesticated beasts to the wild donkeys to the birds in the sky, God has provided water to them all.

Verse 13 describes how God continues to renew this supply of water to His creatures, "He waters the mountains from his upper chambers" (verse 13). We saw these upper chambers mentioned in verse 3. The picture is that God is upon the clouds opening His water spigot to pour fresh water upon the mountains to replenish the springs, which keep the animals alive.

I love the way that the end of verse 13 puts it, "The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works." These words speak to the goodness of God, as does much of this Psalm. Nowhere is God's goodness seen than when He provides food for His creatures. This brings me to my third point this morning, which is, ...

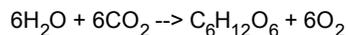
3. Vegetation (verses 14-15).

This comes in verses 14-16. Let's first consider verse 14, "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth." The process by which the grass and vegetation grows is really quite incredible. It's incredible to watch.

A little over a week ago, our family returned from 2½ weeks of vacation. Several things really shocked me when we came home. Our front entryway to our home shocked me. Yvonne had planted some flowers shortly before we left. As we returned home, some of these flowers were four feet tall and beautiful! If you come to our home, you will be able to walk the sidewalk to our front door through a tunnel of flowers that greet you. And they all were made from seed. My wife planted them in our basement in March and transferred them outside in June, and by early August, they stand tall and beautiful! From a little, tiny, hard-shelled kernel, came these giant, beautiful flowers! How did that happen? It was the Lord who caused the flowers to grow.

I was also shocked when I looked at our garden. We haven't put much effort into our garden this year (I have put zero effort into it). But, when I saw what it had become, I was amazed. All of these plants were small seeds this past winter, but placed in the soil and watered with sunlight, they have become large plants. I am especially looking forward to eating some of the tomatoes that come off the tomato plants. How did that happen? It was the Lord who caused the vegetation to grow! How plants grow is amazing.

I remember in college taking a plant physiology class. Of all of the class lectures that were given, I specifically remember one of them. It was the day that the professor explained to us the process of photosynthesis. For 70 minutes, the professor lectured about the process by which plants convert unusable sunlight into usable chemical energy. He described how six molecules of water and six molecules of carbon dioxide in the presence of light produce one molecule of sugar plus six molecules of oxygen, which is depicted in the following chemical equation:



He described the details of the two-step process. The first step in the process takes light and water and Adenosine Disphosphate (ADP) and produces oxygen and Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP). The second step is called the "Calvin-Benson cycle." This process is light-independent. In this process, the hydrogen from the water and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, along with the stored energy in the Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) is transformed into sugar, which can be used by all animals as energy.

In this lecture, our professor went into much greater detail to describe each of these processes, which contain much more complexity than what I just described to you. He talked about the chemical properties of chlorophyll. He talked about the interaction of chlorophyll with the various wavelengths in the visible spectrum. He drew pictures of cells and their systems that allow this reaction to take place. Much of this processes, however, I never really quite understood, nor do I really remember now much of what was said. But, I do remember the lecture.

I think that I remember this particular lecture for two reasons. First is that our professor spent 70 minutes writing out chemical equations and biological pictures on the chalkboard from memory. As a general rule, if someone can tell you something from memory, especially on technical matters, it's important to know. Second is that I was amazed at the complexity of life. All of this must take place for the production of sugar, which gives us all the energy we need to live. I remember reflecting upon how my professor, as an atheist, believed that all of this, "evolved."

All of this is contained in verse 14, "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of man, so that he may bring forth food from the earth."

Verse 14 seems to make it so simple. But, in reality, the process is very complex, and scientists are still seeking today to understand how each step in the process actually works. Books are written about the process of photosynthesis. But, such is the greatness of God. He was able to create this entire process by saying on the third day, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them" (Gen. 1:11). There is no way that all of this could have evolved. It is far too complex. For evolution to take place, each part of each of these cycles would need to be able to be sustained independently of the others (unless, of course, it all "evolved" at once), which is beyond unlikely.

But, fundamentally, verse 14 isn't pointing us to the greatness of God. Rather, it's pointing us to God's goodness. God brings forth vegetation for our good! God brings forth vegetation so that we can live! Verse 15 continues to show us of God's goodness. "And wine which makes man's heart glad, so that he may make his face glisten with oil, and food which sustains man's heart" (verse 15).

The food that God provides for us through the vegetation He causes to grow isn't only to sustain us. It is also given to satisfy us and give us delight. The very last phrase of verse 15 says that "Food ... sustains man's heart." The point that he's making is that God doesn't merely bring forth food to keep us alive in the body. Rather, God gives us food that gives us joy. It "sustains man's heart."

"Wine ... makes man's heart glad." Certainly, there are abuses to alcohol. But, the abuses come precisely because of the pleasure that alcohol gives is so strong that it can easily become addictive. When a party is thrown, it's often with food and drink that's tasty and delightful, so as to satisfy our hearts.

God gives glad hearts to the sons of men, whether they are believing or unbelieving. To the pagans in Lystra, Paul preached of the goodness of God. He said, "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:16-17). Such is the goodness of God. Such is the greatness of God.

Let's look at my fourth point, ...
4. Habitation (verses 16-26).

By this, I simply mean the environment in which we live. Not only has God created an earth in which conditions are right to sustain life, but, He has also taken great care to provide for us. He provides for all of His creation places to live and living conditions that are conducive to all His creation.

The birds are mentioned in verses 16 and 17, "The trees of the LORD drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon which He planted, where the birds build their nests, and the stork, whose home is the fir trees." The goats are mentioned in verse 18, "The high mountains are for the wild goats;" The last half of verse 18 mentions some other animal, "The cliffs are a refuge for the shephanim (or rock badgers or conies)."

Trees provide us with many benefits. They act as wind breakers. They give us shade in which to keep cool. They provide us with building material and the basics for paper. They help prevent erosion. They bring out water from the earth to put it back into the atmosphere above ground. They provide decorations around our homes. Some of them provide fruit for us to enjoy. But, beyond all these things, God has so designed the trees to be homes to the birds of the heavens.

Mountains provide us with many benefits. They are beautiful to behold. They keep the snow in the winter so that they bring water to us in the summer to the lowlands. They provide entertainment: skiing and climbing. But, beyond all these things, God has so designed these mountains that they are homes for animals.

It's not merely the places that God provides for His creatures. He also provides the conditions surrounding our habitations.

Psalm 104:19-20
He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.
You appoint darkness and it becomes night, in which all the beasts of the forest prowl about.
The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God.
When the sun rises they withdraw and lie down in their dens.
Man goes forth to his work And to his labor until evening.

When God made the sun and the moon, he gave them specific purposes. On the fourth day, 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" (Gen. 1:14). "God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night" (Gen. 1:16). But there is more than this.

During the day, when the sun is ruling, it is the time for man to do His work (verse 23). During the night, after the sun sets, it's time for the beasts to "seek their food from God" (verse 21). And when the sun rises again, it's time again for man to do His work (verse 23).

On our vacation, we had opportunity on several occasions to witness the animals at night. We took a side trip to a camp. At this camp we were staying in a cabin that was away from the main lodge. When we put our smallest children to bed, we turned off all of the lights and sat outside this rustic cabin in the pitch black of night, to make sure that they had no problems in falling asleep. During this time, we were able to hear the animals moving in the trees surrounding us.

Have you ever seen road kill along side of the road? How many possums do you see in the daytime? I see a bunch of them along the road dead, but I have not often seen them in the midst of the day. The same is true of raccoons. They are often seen dead alongside the road, but I don't think that I have ever seen a raccoon in the day time. They only come out at night, which God has provided for them. Where do they

stay? They stay in the homes that God has given them.

This is but one small instance in which God creates the necessary conditions for all of His creation to flourish. We could certainly add many more. He gives the dew on the grass for the worms to come out and feed every morning, and the early bird gets the worm. He gives the heat of the day in the desert to warm the cold blooded reptiles. He creates the caves to provide homes for the bats. He provides the milkweed for the Monarchs. He provides the sea for the sea creatures. This is mentioned in verse 25, "There is the sea, great and broad, in which are swarms without number, animals both small and great." He provides the sea for transportation for us, "There the ships move along, and Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it" (verse 26). Perhaps God even made the seas so that we might be able to transport goods cheaply.

When you put all of this together, you all we can say is what verse 24 says, "O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions" (or as some translations say, "creatures" - ESV, NIV). Such is the greatness of God.

I have one last point this morning. We have seen God's greatness displayed in the way that He has provided us with the (1) Earth; (2) Water; (3) Vegetation; (4) Habitation; and now, finally, ...

5. Dependence (verses 27-30).

Psalm 104:27-30
They all wait for You to give them their food in due season.
You give to them, they gather it up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their spirit, they expire and return to their dust.
You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the ground.

These verses show the sovereignty of the Lord over His creation. God hasn't merely set the earth in motion so that we can defend for ourselves. Rather, He has continued to be active in providing for His creatures. The animals, "Wait" for the Lord to give them their food. He reigns and rules today. When the beasts of the forest look for their food, it is God who gives it. I'm not sure how. Perhaps he causes an acorn from an oak tree to drop in such a way that a squirrel can find it and hide it away until needed in the winter.

This past week, my family had the opportunity to attend the Boone County Fair. One of the booths at the fair was a petting zoo in which you were permitted to feed the animals a snack. You would hold out your hand and the animals would strain their necks through the bars to feed direction from your hand. This is exactly how God feeds these animals. God opens His hand to them. And when God opens His hand, then, they are satisfied with food.

But, as sovereign as God is to provide, God is also sovereign to withhold. Should God withhold His blessing, they will be in distress. It is God who takes away their spirit and they die.

As I prepared my message this week, I spent some time thinking about, "life." Scientists have a difficult time really determining what life is and how it exists. We all intrinsically know about life. When know when life is present and when life is absent, but it is difficult to define and understand. What makes a healthy animal different than a corpse of an animal that just died? Not much, except for the spirit that the Lord puts in the live animal. All of the parts are there, but it simply doesn't work apart from the spirit of an animal enlivening the body parts of the animal.

How do you define life? What causes it? What takes it away? Why doesn't a dead animal live? How does a young animal have its life? How does a young animal grow? It's the greatness of God!

What is true for animals is also true for humans as well. God is the author and sustainer of life. Apart from His hand, we all would perish in an instant. We read in Job 34:14,15, ...

Job 34:14-15
If He should determine to do so;
If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,
All flesh would perish together,
And man would return to dust.

We are all dependent upon the Lord for all things. He gives us food. He sustains us. We are totally dependent upon Him in every way. Such is the greatness of God upon the earth!

But, there is no greater way that we are dependent upon Him than when it comes to our sins. As we are fully dependent upon the Lord to give us our food, so also are we dependent upon him to forgive us our sins.

When Jesus taught us to pray, He told us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." I don't believe that the connection here is random at all. Our greatest physical need is for food on a daily basis. Our greatest spiritual need is for forgiveness.

Having seen the greatness of God in providing for us everything that we need physically to live, would you think that the Lord would not provide for us to live eternally as well? It doesn't make sense for the Lord merely to provide for us only in this life, to the neglect of the life to come. God has provided all that we need in His Son. "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3). It is through the true knowledge of Christ that everything that we need for life and godliness comes. He merely calls us to believe in Jesus.

As we believe in Him, this Psalm ends with a call to praise the Lord!

Psalm 104:31-35

Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;
Let the LORD be glad in His works;
He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
He touches the mountains, and they smoke.
I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.
Let sinners be consumed from the earth
And let the wicked be no more
Bless the LORD, O my soul
Praise the LORD!

We can praise the Lord this morning for His greatness in providing all that we need for life. But, we, of all people on earth, can especially praise Him, knowing that through Christ our sins are forgiven!

Not all can say this (verse 35). The sinners and wicked will be consumed from the earth. But, if you have embraced Christ as Your Savior and Lord, you can worship Him through Jesus Christ.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 10, 2008 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
