

The Wonderful Works of God

by William Fitch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praising God for His wonderful works and the need to think greatly about God to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Duration: 37:36

Scripture: Psalm 111:2-10

Topics: "Gods Providence", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker discusses the works of the Lord as described in the book of Psalms. The speaker emphasizes God's greatness, honor, and compassion towards his people. The covenant made with Abram is highlighted, along with God's providence and faithfulness. The sermon also touches on the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles and the work of redemption through Jesus Christ. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing God's wondrous works and the laws of the universe that allow mankind to work together with them.

Transcript

Shall we pray? Lord be with us now as we open your word. Speak to our hearts we pray. May we have that ear that is opened to the entrance of thy word that giveth light.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. I want to think with you this morning about the wonderful works of God.

One could turn to a hundred passages of scripture but there is one passage above all others that I want to think with you about and from and it's the hundred and eleven psalm. Psalm 111. It's very short psalm but it's the hymn of praise.

It's the great doxology. Praise to God for his glorious and gracious works. And it's in that light that we're going to think about it this morning.

I got a call on Tuesday evening about six o'clock from the Toronto telegram asking me if I would comment on the significance of man having reached the moon and walked upon it. And asking if I felt there was any significance there that would be hostile to Christian faith in days to come. Or did I think that what had happened was really going to help and further the Christian faith.

One is always to be very careful when speaking over the phone with these good reporters. And one is always to try and be absolutely exact and try and choose the right words with the right emphasis. But my own reply crystallized down into perhaps just a single sentence was this.

All that happened last Sunday and the events leading to it should man today think more of the God of wonders. And the God who only does wondrous things. Because everything that has happened has happened because there are fixed and inviolate laws of the universe.

And it is because these laws have been discovered that man has been able to accommodate himself to these laws and to work together with them. And in working together with these laws has been able to make the amazing technological advances that he has in our generation. It so happened that the reporter was greatly interested and we kept on talking.

It developed really into discussion, far more than just a simple statement. And it was very, very interesting to hear him say himself, though apparently an unbeliever, it is striking me that there are far more people than I believed, far more people than I believed, who really believe in Christian things. And he said it has been for me one of the wonders of this past week to see the way in which one of the men very definitely took the elements of his Holy Communion to the moon.

And together with his congregation on earth, in the Southern Presbyterian Church of which he's an elder, shared in that act of Holy Communion. And so we got talking and one thing led to another. It was quite evident that he himself, as I've said, was deeply stirred and willing to talk.

And in one case at least, obviously the wonderful works of God, and the way in which accommodation to these wonderful works, these wonderful principles of God, had wrought such wonders, had been, had brought this man, this reporter, to the place of being willing to think in a way in which he had not thought before. And it's this very thought that is recurring again and again in the hundred and eleven Psalms. I don't know whether you know this psalm well or not, but in the second verse it says, The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

The works of the Lord are great, they are sought out of them that have pleasure therein. And it begins, this psalm, with a tremendous summons to praise. Praise ye the Lord.

The simple word in the original is hallelujah. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. Because the works of the Lord are great, and they are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

And this little psalm elaborates on these mighty works of God. For this writer, God was great. A great God, in a great universe, doing great things.

And God was great in all his thoughts. And if you and I are truly to worship God, if you and I are to bring to the Lord the worship that is due unto his name, we must think greatly about God. For the beginning of all true worship is to begin and think greatly about God.

We must have more of the spirit of our friends in the east end of the city, who recently, when the God is dead theology was having a slight currency in this city, put up on their church board the notice, our God is alive. Sorry about yours. I feel that this is the right note.

Our God is alive. For far too many of us, God has become an imprisoned God. A God imprisoned amid the unbelief of the century.

For too many of us, God has been, become so humanized as to be only a slightly larger version of man. Possibly a superman, if you like. But certainly not the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity.

We must learn to think greatly about God. And in order to worship God in spirit and in truth, God must be for us the altogether other one. The transcendent God.

The omniscient God. The sovereign God. The God whose attributes infinitely transcend our finite understanding.

And a God whose majesty and mercy are made known throughout all his works. Perverted and unworthy notions of God soon rot the religion in which they appear. The long history of Israel demonstrates this very evidently.

Because when Israel turned from the true and living God and began to set up for herself idols and to bow down and to worship idols as she did, it was the first step down from a high and exalted worship of God. And the history of the Christian church demonstrates this at every step. The first step downwards for any church is when she surrenders her high, her exalted, her transcendent thoughts of God.

And the Christian church will never go into eclipse unless there has first been a corrupting of her thought of God. It is a debasing of the idea of God that leads to a debasement of life and worship. To the question, what is God like? If we cannot give a strong and worthy answer, we can be sure that the decline in our worship has begun.

And this is why it's so essential for us to think great thoughts about God. To have in our minds only the God of whom the scriptures speak. The works of God who is great, and who is sought out by all who have pleasure therein.

The wonderful works of God. Now we've been reminded of this during these recent days. I suppose that in practical Liverpool, but around the world, there'll be some reference being made to what has happened in the past ten days.

And it's right that we should do so. But I note again, what is the basic affirmation? That this that has happened has not happened because of man's invention only. Let it be recognized that the engineering techniques behind the Apollo mission are altogether amazing.

And that the synchronization that has been made possible by the computerization of so much of programming and planning and engineering, is a symbol of our time and the wonder of our time. But the computer itself, and we're going to see more and more of it. We're going to see more and more of the wonder of it.

But the computer itself, I say, is there because of the discovery of certain basic laws. Laws that were established when the universe was established. This is not the result of man's invention.

This is not the creation, this law, are these laws. They are not the creation of man. It is because these laws have been discovered.

Laws that the great and mighty God, who inhabits eternity, made when first the worlds flashed into sunlight. And it's because these laws are increasingly being discovered, that we are increasingly seeing wonderful things. Before us, the works of the Lord are great.

It's the works of the Lord. Thank God for the works of man. Thank God for the way in which we are able to see man touching the edges of the utmost stars.

And thank God for the way in which man's intellect, key to highest pitch, and working in team formation, has been able to do what it has done. It has been altogether unique. Of course it has.

But it has been altogether possible. Because in the beginning, when God laid the foundations of the earth, he laid it on fixed principles. He laid it on unique and miraculous laws.

And he established that these laws should abide. And they are as unchangeable as God himself is unchangeable. And this is the wonder, that we must think of, when we think about the works of the Lord.

Now the psalmist, who wrote the hundred and eleven psalms, says, that the works of the Lord are a theme for praise. Praise ye the Lord. That's how he begins.

Praise ye the Lord. This amazing psalm, that starts in this way. Praise ye the Lord.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart. Praise ye the Lord. You see, there is only one adequate response to the revelation of the wonderful works of God.

And that is praise. It is, as I've said, the word hallelujah, that begins this psalm. Hallelujah.

I will praise the Lord for his greatness. And in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation, I will praise the Lord. Now this is why we have song at the heart of all our worship.

This is why the Christian sings. This is why praise is of the very essence of our worship. Because only when we see the glory of God, will we praise.

And when we do see the glory of God, we cannot help but praise. Why this amazing psalter, out of which we're reading, these hundred and fifty psalms, from which we are reading this morning, and taking up, lifting up, this one hundred and eleventh in particular, is the great pion of praise to the God who only does wondrous, wondrous things. Praise is at the heart of all our worship.

And when praise departs from our heart, I tell you, something else has departed. There has departed the thoughts of God, the God who is great. There has gone from us the realization, the God, the infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal God.

The God who sitteth upon the throne of the heavens. This God is our God forever and ever. When we lose that, we lose our song.

The only true response to the works of God, and the revelation of the works of God, is praise. Now there are many for whom the world around, and the mighty acts of God in history, hold no significance. You remember what words were said, a primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more, nothing more, nothing more, impossible, incapable of seeing beyond the primrose by the river's brim, to the God who clothes the heavens in their beauty, and to the God who will clothes you, O ye of little faith.

This God, his acts are manifold, in creation, in history, in grace, all alike proclaiming the glory of God, and all alike summoning forth our praise. And so David says, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, with my whole heart, I will praise the Lord. And I tell you there is only one adequate expression, that should characterize our worship this morning as we meet, and it is the outflow of hearts, filled with gratitude.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, with my whole heart, for all his works in creation, for all his gifts to us, his gift of life, his gift of health, his gift of friends, for the salvation that he has wrought, for sending his son to Bethlehem and to Calvary, for the wonder of Easter and the glory of Pentecost, for all the promises of God that are yea and amen in Christ Jesus our Lord. For today, this very day in which we live, this day that the Lord has made, this day, this holy day, there is only one response, and that is praise. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.

And I tell you there is only one adequate expression, that should characterize our worship this morning as we meet, and it is the outflow of hearts, filled with gratitude. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, with my whole heart, I will praise the Lord. And I tell you there is only one adequate expression, that should characterize our worship this morning as we meet, and it is the outflow of hearts, filled with gratitude.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart. And I tell you there is only one adequate expression, that should characterize our worship this morning as we meet, and it is the outflow of hearts, praise the Lord with my whole heart. O Lord my God, we sing, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed, but then, then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee, how great Thy glory is.

Thou art, how great Thou art, then sings my soul, I will praise Thee with my whole heart. Praise is the only answer to the revelation of the works of God. But now David is very careful to say a second thing, and he notes it quite subtly, but very definitely.

Look at verse one, I will praise Thee with my whole heart, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. And then in verse two, the works of the Lord are great, they are sought out of all them who have pleasure therein. The assembly of the upright, the congregation, the assembly of them that have pleasure therein.

Now here is a special category of people, the upright, the assembly, the congregation, those who take pleasure in God. And this is a particular fellowship, and it's right that we should note this too, because this is a fellowship of revelation. You see, this has been made known, these mighty works of God, have been made known to a special company of people.

Not to a coterie, in any sense of the term, but to a special company, to an elect people, to a people of God's possession, to a people whom God himself has chosen and called by their name, and said to them, Thou art mine. Why look at verse six, he assured his people the power of his works. Now what is this, and how is this possible? This is possible because of special revelation.

This is possible because God has made himself known to them that have pleasure in his commandments. God reveals himself, the assembly of the upright. The works of the Lord are great, and they are sought out by them that have pleasure therein.

I remember in one week listening to two men in Britain. Both of them were in the military forces, and both of them had returned from India. I heard both of them speak in the one week.

One was a Christian, and the other was not. There was a question period at both meetings, and the same man asked the same question of both men. Though a week separated the questions.

The question was this, when you were in India, did you see any real evidence of the impact of Christianity in India? One of them said, I've been in India for seven years, and I can honestly say that in the course of these seven years I saw nothing that I could say was evidence of the impact of Christianity in India. A week passed, and the second man was asked the same question. I remember so well his answer, because when he was asked the question, it was as though his face lit up.

And he said, yes, I've been there in India for a good number of years now. I think it was nine or ten. And in the course of that time, I have met with scores upon scores of Christian pastors, national pastors.

I've had the opportunity of preaching, or ministering, I think was the word he used, at the conventions in the hills. I have had every opportunity of going from one end of the country to the other. And I have seen lives transformed.

I have seen a church emerging. I have seen a church growing under the preaching of the living word. And I would say today, that the strongest man in India, the man to whom we can look for hope for the future, are men who have come under the influence of the Christian faith.

What an extraordinary divergence of statement. But look, this second man had sought out the company of the Christians when he went. The works of the Lord are great, sought out by them who have pleasure therein.

Sought out. Yes, indeed. There is a special community.

And God's works are revealed to this special community in nature and in grace. Above all else, he reveals his wondrous works in grace to this company of his own, as he reveals himself God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and of earth. And yet the God who has sent his only begotten Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

And this company, this company who have been called out through Jesus Christ, who have heard his call, follow me, and have begun to follow, to this special company, God has revealed himself. And you see, special revelation only becomes relevant within the circle of the church. It is to the church that special revelation has relevance.

And that is why we turn to the Word of God, and we pour into the Word of God, and we read, and we study, and we mark, and we inwardly digest the Word of God. And as we do so, we know ourselves part of a great company that no man can number. Sought out.

Sought out. They seek God because he first has sought them. And they seek to know the wonder of his mighty acts, because he has first sought them.

But special revelation, and oh how we need to stress this, special revelation belongs and is prized and is rejoiced over within the assembly of the upright and in the great congregation. Those who have pleasure in the law and in the commandment of God. Yes indeed, the works of the Lord are great, and the only response to these works is praise.

These works are really known only by the church. It is to the man who has spiritual discernment that this becomes known. But then note this also.

Let's just look through the psalm quickly. Verse 2, the works of the Lord are great. Verse 3, his work is honorable.

Verse 4, he has made his wonderful works memorable. He is gracious and full of compassion. There is the heart of God.

Verse 5, he has given meat unto them that fear him. He is ever mindful of his covenant. The oath that he swore unto our father, Abram.

The covenant that today again we have observed. The providence that follows those who seek him. Providing man in the wilderness and the covenant abiding forever.

Verse 6, he has showed his people the power of his works, that he might give them the heritage of the heathen. What is this? This is the work of God in history. This is the opening of the door of faith even to the Gentiles.

This is the raising of a people to be a blessing to the ends of the earth. God's church sent out into all the earth. Look at verse 7, the works of his hand are of verity and judgment.

All his commandments are sure. And verse 8, they stand fast forever and ever. And they are done in truth and uprightness.

These are the works of the Lord. But I want you to note that the works of the Lord are consummated in the greatest work of all at Calvary. In the work of redemption.

Because look at verse 9, he sent redemption unto his people. He has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and to be revered is the name of our God.

The climax of all the mighty acts of God is the climax that we see at the cross. Where he sends redemption for his people. And where he opens for us the gates of new life.

And where he offers to you the beginning of a new life. I wonder if you have met him at the cross. I wonder if you have come unto that cross where he sent his son to die for you.

I wonder if you have seen God in action. For what is happening at Calvary? At Calvary, God is at work. At Calvary, God is revealing his love.

At Calvary, God is meeting this tremendous tidal force of sin and evil and corruption and rottenness. And God is taking it all and pouring it into the very heart of his son. And the son of God at Calvary is absorbing it all.

Because all our sin was laid upon him. And there at the cross he opened for us a fountain for sin and for uncleanness. The works of the Lord, they're great.

They're great. They are great. You see what David is saying? First, the only answer to them is praise.

Second, it's only the true believer who sees them. It's only the church that can understand. Only the church.

As Dr. DeGenge reminded us on Wednesday night, the words of John Calvin, and let's keep this within its true context, no man can truly call God Father who cannot first call the church his mother. Within the church these things are known. But then thirdly, the climax of all the works of God are seen at the cross.

He sent redemption unto his people. He sent redemption unto his people. Is there anything more to be said? Why, of course.

Let me just say one word more. The works of the Lord, God's mighty acts, demand a life of joyful obedience to his commandment. I love this word that we have here.

Verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding of all they that do his commandments. I think it would be a wonderful thing if we could all go home and meditate this afternoon just on that one phrase.

A good understanding of all they that do. Remember our Lord said, he that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine. It is in obedience, it is in obedience to the word and commandment of our God that we come to have this good understanding.

But the summons to all who have seen the works of God and whose hearts have been filled with praise, the summons to us all is to serve the Lord with gladness, to come before his presence with singing and to do his will. A good understanding then is given. A good understanding is given to all who do his commandments.

Do you know the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit? You've read much about this, I'm sure, and you've listened to many who have spoken about this, I'm sure. But I want to tell you that the greatest gift of the Holy Spirit is spiritual discernment. Being able to know God's will.

Being able to discern God's ways. Being able to advise and to counsel in the things of God. Being able.

And here is the way in which this comes. A good understanding, spiritual discernment if you will, is the property of all them who do the commandments of God. His praise will then endure forever.

Isn't this tremendous? Isn't that a perfect psalm to follow the week that we have known? The works of the Lord, mighty and great, let us praise him for them. Let us rejoice within the congregation of the righteous over these works. Let us constantly remember that the climax of all these works are a calvary.

Is a calvary. Is a calvary. And let us see to it that our lives in joyful, glad obedience are given back to the service of the God whose works are great.

Now a prayer. Oh Father almighty and all merciful, truly we marvel at the wonder of your works on every hand. We rejoice in them.

We are glad today. We thank thee for what we have been privileged to see in recent days. We thank thee for the emancipation that has been given and the demonstration of those laws that abide, immutable, and in the observance of which there is for us all joy.

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