

# Sermon

## 7 October 2018

### West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Reading: Psalm 104

Harvest Thanksgiving

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- Today is harvest thanksgiving Sunday.
- Today we offer our thanks for what the earth has yielded, which will sustain us for the year ahead.
- Today we say thank you to God for bountiful crops to be harvested, and for farmers who harvest these crops.
- Today we thank God for his marvellous creation.

And one of the most beautiful songs of praise and thanksgiving we find in the Bible, is Psalm 104. So today I would like us to read this Psalm, bit by bit, and to not only HEAR it, but to SEE it.

Because to me this Psalm feels like a showcase of all the amazing things God created and sustains...

This flamboyant description conjures an image of a ringmaster calling forth sights and sounds and skills the like of which has never been seen.

Creating strangeness and beauty together; bringing out the best; putting it all together; choreographing the most amazing spectacle of light and sound and fire and water.

So before we read Psalm 104, please look at this wee video clip. It's the preview of the film *The Greatest Showman*...

*Psalm 104:1-9: Creation*



Can you see it?

Can you see how God wraps himself in light, makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind?

Beautiful metaphors; reminding us that the essence of God can never be captured in words.

In Old Testament times they didn't have all the scientific knowledge we have today – but one thing they knew very well, was that if it wasn't for God, nothing would be here.

So they pictured the earth placed firmly on 4 pillars, covered by a transparent sphere, keeping the water away from the earth, until God opens the windows in this sphere and then some of the water comes down in the form of rain.

They were scared of water in those days, to them water represented chaos, everything they didn't understand; but by believing that God set a boundary to the water, they knew He would never allow their fear to drown them.

And God still does that. We know now that the earth is round and that the blue sky is not a mass of water on the other side of a sphere, and this makes me even more aware of the greatness of God's creation. And just like he set a boundary to the water, he'll set a boundary to everything we fear today too.

Sometimes our worries and troubles can be huge, but God's care is ALWAYS bigger.

*Psalm 104:10-18: Moistening and growth*



Can you see it?

How God waters the mountains from his upper chambers?

How he controls the water so it does good? So it's there to drink for animals and people, to make the plants grow so that we can cultivate and eat them?

Although too much water can take a life, and not enough water can take a life – here God's gracious giving of just the right amount of water to sustain life is praised.

From the wild donkeys to the birds of the air, from cattle to man, from wild goats to rock badgers – God brings forth food from the earth: grass, wine, oil, bread – everything we need.

We are interdependent on each other, and completely dependent on God.

*Psalm 104:19-26: Sun, sea and seasons*



Can you see it?

How the moon marks off the seasons and the sun knows just when to go down?

How when the beasts are out to hunt at night, we people are fast asleep, and when we get up to work when the sun rises, the lions return and lie down in their dens?

So many contrasts, darkness and light; wild and cultured; yet everything fits perfectly, like pieces of a puzzle, put together very skilfully.

And here we are back at the scary waters again. Why would they be so afraid of water? Because when people fell into the water, they sometimes never come back out... So maybe there was a huge big monster under the water, called the Leviathan, or as we say here in Scotland – the Loch Ness Monster...

We are always looking for explanations. “Why?” is one of our favourite questions.

Why does *this* have to happen to me?

Why does this have to happen to *me*?

The God who created this wonderful world, where everything works, is in charge of our lives. Sometimes only He knows why.

So we can get stuck in the why’s, focus on the monsters trying to drag us down, or we can trust our Maker, focus on Him, and allow him to pull us up.

*Psalm 104:27-30: Harvest*



Can you see it?

How we all look up to God – big and small, young and old, animal and human – to give us our food at the proper time?

How when God opens his hand, we are all satisfied with good things?

How when, if we all do what we are supposed to do, God not only takes care of us, but also takes care of the whole world through us?

We might not all be farmers, but just like the farmers, we all have a very important role to play in God creation.

God created the world and put us in charge. He gave us everything we need. He still gives us everything we need, every single day, but we need to do our part in this truly amazing act called 'life on earth'.

God is THE GREATEST SHOWMAN. Showman with a capital S.

When I drive here to church, I look at the leaves turning from green into all different shades of red, yellow and orange. And I see God painting a canvas.

I see tractors and combine harvesters and trailers filled with hay bales – this is usually the time of year when I’m late for everything, because if you’re stuck behind a tractor on the *Lang Whang*, there’s no use trying to fly past it – so I just use this little extra time to remember that God gave us those crops to harvest...

God is the greatest Showman, but the act will just not be complete if only nature is participating. WE are the main characters. And we should take care of nature, take care of each other.

We should participate whole heartedly. Because if we don’t, there won’t be an act forever. Then our Ringmaster will be as disappointed as the one in the clip, when it all disappears, when it goes dark and quiet at the end.

It all started with darkness – in the video clip – in creation. But then God switched the lights on. Let’s praise him for that, and keep them on.

Like we heard in the song: “It’s everything you’ll ever want, it’s everything you’ll ever need, and it’s right here in front of you...”

So let’s thank God for the harvest, let’s thank God for life – in the words of Psalm 104:31-35:

<sup>31</sup> *May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;*

*may the Lord rejoice in his works –*

<sup>32</sup> *he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,*

*who touches the mountains, and they smoke.*

<sup>33</sup> *I will sing to the Lord all my life;*

*I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.*

<sup>34</sup> *May my meditation be pleasing to him,*

*as I rejoice in the Lord.*

<sup>35</sup> *But may sinners vanish from the earth*

*and the wicked be no more.*

*Praise the Lord, my soul.*

*Praise the Lord.*

Amen