

Sermon Transcript - Looking God-Ward

Pastor Chad 0:03

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God says the Psalmist. The skies proclaim the work of his hands, day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words no sound is heard from them and yet their voice goes out to all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Sit out on a calm, clear, crisp night, and to see the stars in the sky to know that those things that are so small seem so small, because they're so far away those things are so immense. And it's our God that spoke these things into existence.

One of the things I love about the last little while because of where our home is, is that I've been walking down to the beach. At the end of the day. Early in the morning, sometimes before others can get up and can get at me and the whole work starts to just to go down by the beach and to look out across the water, basically the same thing for my home. There was no water from my home when I was growing up, it was just a long expanse of wheat fields and the same deal. You see this massive horizon and then the sky seems to change all the time, of course, that's what the psalmist is talking about when he talks about the heavens. He's not necessarily talking about space, as we would he's talking about all of that stuff that is up there above us, he says, All of that stuff proclaims the work of our God.

And I'll bet you, you sat out some time, at someplace and just gazed up at the sky. Maybe you've been doing some star gazing, maybe you even have a telescope and you've been looking at, trying to find different kinds of stars or different kinds of planets. Maybe you've simply been sitting down on a quiet warm Saturday afternoon and watching the different kinds of shapes that you can see in the clouds, or maybe the last few months you've been sitting down and watching storms roll in over the country side, seeing them come in and with power and fury seem to dump all kinds of water down.

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God, there's very few times when I take the time to sit and actually look at what's going on I'm not filled with the sense of awe and wonder about how amazing this is and then as I start to learn about all of the different things that are out in space still, not just things that we can see here but so far out there. I encourage you to actually, if you get the time at some point to go through one of these YouTube videos that talks about the different sizes of things in the solar system and compares them all of the, the immensity of some of the worlds where the universe is largest stars; even here in our little galaxy, the Milky Way galaxy, is just incredible and

to think that our God only spoke these things into existence but picked teams to guide and sustain them and that that same God that guides and sustains everything that that shows His glory through the movement of a thunderstorm or through the clouds during a sunset or through the stars as they keep their time and we see them and they stay in the same place and help guide us throughout our navigational journey.

That same God has decided to step into history to become a part of his creation, to become one of us. This God who maintains and made all of this has stepped into history to make us his people and this is what drives Paul to praise. Read Ephesians chapter 3: 20. To him who is able to do immeasurably more than, all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us. To him, Paul says, To him be glory in the church and those were called apart and called out by Jesus. And in Christ Jesus wrote all generations forever and ever Paul says, This is so amazing that this God has been a part of this that his power lives within us that we want praise and glory and honor to always go to him because it is so incredible what he has done for us. Amen. He says so may it be. To him be glory.

Now, over the next three weeks we as a congregation here at Woody Nook church and if you're joining us online I encourage you to follow through the next three weeks, because these three weeks we are going to be looking at three distinct rhythms within the life of a disciple or a follower of Jesus. The first of these is kind of an upward rhythm it's the rhythm, where we might call worship, or prayer or some kind of God word connection as an individual and as a community.

So today we're going to explore what it means to reach up to our God in worship. Next week we're going to talk about this rhythm of reaching in towards a particular community. it's particularly important now as our community seems to have been spread out in various ways that we need to be intentional about reaching in to a particular church. If you don't have a individual congregation I encourage you to get in touch with either myself or with Pastor Dayna, so that you could be a part of, or made a part of this particular community. If you are a part of this church. Find ways and we'll talk about this next week to have to be connected with others who are here and to maintain really good fellowship, and so there's this reaching in towards each other in fellowship.

And then there's third rhythm within this kind of way that we follow God and these things we see in Jesus life is this outward rhythm, where our love and adoration of the Father helps us to develop a community here that is also seeking to share this good

news and all of our incredible blessings, with others who are not yet a part of our community and so we reach out in service and in love and evangelism and so we'll talk about those three different kinds of things.

And those actually come out of our vision statements. Now this is a vision statement that was involved developed by Woody Nook Christian Reformed Church, a little while ago before I came here, and it's a vision which encompasses all three of these rhythms.

This is our vision that we are a multi generational communal community, desiring to continually draw closer to the Triune God, there's that upward rhythm, connecting to God, walking together through life's journey as we reach in towards one another and blessing our neighbors in very tangible ways, that's an outward rhythm in service. And I would say in evangelism because sharing the good news of who Jesus is also hopes that they will accept the good news of who Jesus is and they'll learn to love him and submit more of their life to him, just like we are continually learning to do as well.

Today we're thinking about what it means to reach up to God in worship and in some ways we're using Paul, as an example, here we're seeing how Paul's just his overflowing personality just blows up in praise and worship to God, when he starts to think about how incredible it is of what Jesus. Excuse me, what Jesus has done for us. Now in the book of Ephesians, it's a it's one of these letters that actually Paul has a really good relationship with those with whom he's writing and he he shares praise and he prays for them and he gives all kinds of examples of how God is at work in their community. It starts off. In fact in chapter one verse seven: says in him that is in Jesus we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin. So all of those things that used to separate us from God and used to do damage to others in our community, those have all been removed, Paul says, because of what Jesus has done in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to His good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put in effect when times reach their fulfillment so it hasn't been completely done yet. It will be finished at some point but at this point we still know that this is true, to bring unity to all things in heaven and earth under Christ.

Now unity turns out to be a major theme in this book and actually in all of Paul's writings and in a lot of what the New Testament teaches it's this fact that those who follow Jesus are made a part of one particular community, and whether you're Jew or

Gentile, barbarians, Scythian, slave or free wherever you come from whatever tribe language wherever color scheme you have any of these different kinds of things you believe and follow Jesus you're a part of the same family the same community.

All those who follow Jesus are a part of one family because we all experienced the same redemption, or rescue. We're going Ephesians two verse one as for who you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world, and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. So, at one point, you were powerless to save or to do anything about the damage that you are doing to rectify situations that had happened in the past, you couldn't do anything to save those things or to stop or to heal those things. And in which you used to live, you used to do those things still that stuff that you know was not good for you or it was not good for others who are around you know that the things you continue to do when you follow the ways of the world and ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit at work and those who were disobedient, all of us, Paul says, all of us, it's not as though he said you bad people. I'm so good. You're so bad. Paul, who actually was a really righteous or a good person, if you want to put it that way. He was someone who followed the instructions well he did everything right. He was someone who you would say, was a good guy. And yeah, he says, even then he lived among those other things gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest we were by nature deserving of wrath, but because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved, it is a gift that is given to you, nothing that you've earned nothing that you could have done, you are dead remember now you have been made alive. And just like we cannot produce life, life cannot be just developed within us it is given to us by God and Paul says, this is a gift. For us it's like grace you have been saved and he says, not only that God raised us up with Christ, and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

So if you'll remember we talked a while in the Hebrews book, or as we were discussing the book of Hebrews we talked a while about how incredible it is that Jesus who is one of us incarnate or a God made into a human being. He is sitting at the right hand of the Father right now moving over everything's and Paul says, Not only that, but because we are united with Christ we also are seated there, too. In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. This is all of a gift and it's for all of us who follow Jesus. Paul says This is incredible. It doesn't matter where you come from, it doesn't matter what your background is it doesn't matter what story you've been told it doesn't matter how

much you believe you're not worthy of love, or of redemption or being a part of a particular community doesn't matter how many times people have told you that you are worthless, that you are dirty, that you are a sinful rotten human being, no matter how many times people have said that you are bad, and there's nothing that you can do about it.

Maybe people have told you that your life will amount to absolutely nothing and yet here Paul says, uh-huh. By yourself, sure. But in Jesus, you have been raised to new life. And beyond that you've been united with the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, and you have been seated as well at the right hand of the Father there so that God could show just how gracious just how giving just how loving just how incredible his riches are towards us. It's a gift for all of us. And so Paul says in verse 19. This is Chapter Two of Ephesians verse 19: consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers but you are fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles, and the prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone and in him. Paul says the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord and in him you too, Paul says due to are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Holy Spirit we are being built into a new temple a new dwelling a new community a community preserved protected and gathered for Jesus a community within which God Himself lives.

Like this is, this is amazing, Paul says. and Paul is just like over the top and so maybe he isn't maybe they got me a little over the top here as well but it's just, it's so incredible as Paul just bubbles up with these over the top statements and yet we cannot grasp exactly what God means with all of these things or exactly how to describe them we use all of these phrases: the incomparable riches of God's grace that is shown to us in His mercy, but we don't, it's, it's almost impossible to use words to explain these things. which is why Paul then turns to this prayer and at the start of chapter three he starts he says, For this reason I Paul, a prisoner in Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles. He says, For this reason he's going to get back to that because in the meantime right there at the beginning of chapter three, he goes on to explain why he's a prisoner and how he's given his life to follow Jesus and now he's a prisoner. Because he claims Jesus is Lord. And then he goes back in verse 14. For this reason, because we are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirits. For this reason, Paul kneels before the Father, from whom, every family in heaven on earth derives its name. And I pray that out of His glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirits in your inner being, that Christ may dwell

in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may then have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp, how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Deep and wide, deep and wide, there's a fountain flowing deep and wide. This love of Christ is so immense, Paul says. What he prays, what he longs for, or he begs God to do for these people who are gathered in Ephesus, these people to whom he's written this letter this church. He's people that follow Jesus, he says, I long for you to experience to know Christ.

The Greek word that is translated "to know" here's the word for "Kenosis". And it's a word which means to learn to know to come to understand, to accept based on evidence, to know intimately or to become intimately acquainted with. It's actually the word that's also used as a euphemism to talk about sexual relationships. You Adam knew, even they conceived and had a child.

And Paul longs for the people to have that kind of experience to not just have it in their heads, not just be able to recite different kinds of things but for them to be filled with awe and wonder at the incredible things that God has done for Jesus just like we are filled with awe and wonder when we go out and we stand on a beach by the ocean we hear the waves and we wonder how many thousands of miles those waves have traveled or maybe, as we lay down on the beach here at Gull Lake. Can we look up at the stars in an evening and we can't even begin to count them because it seems that every time you look there seems to be more appearing or anytime we sit, we trace a storm coming in over the landscape or anytime we see a beautiful sunrise or sunsets, that paints the clouds that are there, various shades of purple or red or pink. Paul longs for them and for us to know through actual experience just how credible, is that this awesome, amazing infinite God cares about each one of us, he counts the hairs on our head. He collects our tears in his bottle that he wraps us up in love, as we mourn the loss of loved ones.

And he's closer to us than even our closest family members. To experience, show reverence and adoration for the God of the universe who came to be among us for the God who reconciled us to himself, and to one another and now lives within and above us to this, God, this king of the universe, who is also our friend, and our Father.

For those of us who follow Jesus we are heirs and co-heirs with Christ, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. I mean this is, this is so incredible. It's so hard for us to gather

and to grasp and to even understand, but I encourage you at some point during this day maybe or during this week to sit out under a sky somewhere, and to just observe. And to think about the God that is now sustaining and guiding and shaping all that's going on right there above you to think about the millions and trillions and quadrillions of miles that separate you from some of those stars that you can see in the night sky to think about the ways in which we need to be almost 200 million miles away from the sun for this to be a place where we can actually live and inhabit and that this God who maintains all of these things is also there right beside you.

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God. The sky is proclaimed the work of his hands, day after day they pour forth speech night after night they reveal knowledge they have no speech they use no words no sound is heard from them and yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world, and sitting and experiencing something of the immensity of creation, whether that be on a beach under a sky, whether that be on a cab of a tractor as you harvest and reflect on the miracle of grain to or seed to grain back to seed. Again, or as you think about the ways in which you sit around a table and your family has all gathered there together, and your heart is full if there are things that bring you joy and love and a sense of awe and wonder remember it is God who gives us these things and the God who has shaped and created and sustains this whole world has taken a personal interest in us. In you as well.

This God has given himself for us for each and every one of us. And for this reason I along with Paul kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that I pray that you be rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the Lord's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love to know this love that surpasses all knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God, that when I pray. And I pray that we as a community will learn to practice this rhythm of worship to intentionally, think about ways in which we can experience, adoration and love for our God who is here that we would reach up to the one who has reached down to us to be welcomed and embraced by the Father, who longs to gather us up in his arms. So that we would all know just how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God that is revealed to us in Jesus. Amen.

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