

January 22, 2017
Psalm 104:1-4

¹Praise the LORD, my soul.

**LORD my God, you are very great;
you are clothed with splendor and majesty.**

²The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment;
he stretches out the heavens like a tent

**³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on
their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot
and rides on the wings of the wind.**

⁴He makes winds his messengers,
flames of fire his servants.

**²⁴ How many are your works, LORD!
In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.**

²⁵There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.

**²⁶ There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.**

²⁷All creatures look to you
to give them their food at the proper time.

**²⁸ When you give it to them,
they gather it up;
when you open your hand,
they are satisfied with good things.**

²⁹When you hide your face,
they are terrified;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to the dust.

**³⁰ When you send your Spirit,
they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.**

Greetings First Baptist Members and Friends. I thank you for joining us this morning as we stop to praise, honor, and worship a living God. I also want to thank those who attended the Women's Prayer luncheon yesterday. Kita (will you stand) delivered a powerful and thought provoking message. If you were present let's give her another round of applause and a loud of AMEN.

This has been a very unusual week for Rev. Jesse and I. Within a 24-hour period, a young man who was part of Jesse's boys/men's ministry was shot and killed; Josephine Murray a long-time member of 50+ years died peacefully in her sleep; and Uncle George was called for work to reward at the age of 88.

That was enough, I thought, but Saturday morning God called Ms. Willie Mae Gooch home, as well. As I reflected on all of this I was reminded of a favorite phrase of Ms. Murray "old age is not for sissies" it was her response to loss of independence; poor health and failing eyesight.

Then my thoughts drifted to Ms. Willie Mae. When she was first diagnosed with cancer she told us "I am going to be alright"; when the cancer returned she still declared her faith in a living Savior and said, "Pastor Carol, I am all right"; then when she had to leave her apartment and move in with her daughter there was never a word of complaint, just a prayer to return to church; a commitment to this body by sending her tithes; a closing word of cheer whenever I called. Our last words were words of love and care for each other.

It seemed fitting to me that after a week of dreary weather, fog and rain that the sun would shine on the day Ms. Willie Mae left us. I say this because during our time in Sunday School I learned how much she enjoyed the wonders of creations. She walked to church when she could; she marveled at the changing of the seasons; she was fully aware of her place in the universe and who held her place.

Psalms 104, the passage under consideration this morning, is a psalm that celebrates The Creation of the World from a biblical perspective and follows closely with the Creation Story as recorded in Genesis 1.

v 2	God creates light	Gen 1:3-5
vv 2-4	divides the water above and below	Gen 1:6-8
vv 5-9	separation of dry land and water	Gen 1:9-10

vv11-13	trees and plants	Gen 1:11-13
vv14-19	sun, stars and moon	Gen 1:14-19
vv 20-23	sea creatures	Gen 1:20-23
vv 24-28	animals	Gen 1:21-24
vv 27-30	food for all creation	Gen1:27-28 ₁

If you simply take this Psalm at face value it is a call to remember how God created the world. And the remembering ought to bring us to praise. I mean after all, if the God who created the world and all that dwells within; if the God who cares about the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air; if the God who knew us in our mother's womb, numbered the hairs on our heads and knows the plans He has for us is Our God, Our Lord and Our Savior then praising Him ought just to be a part of our everyday activities.

That got me to thinking, why don't some people do what they know they ought to do? Now I realize that are many and varied reasons but this morning I want to make one reason the focus of this sermon. I believe it is a moral struggle. Pray with me as I work with this theme:

I GOT TO DO BETTER!

SHALL WE PRAY!

God who was, is and yet to come we thank you this morning for all that you have provided. We thank you for the gift of life here on earth and the promise of eternal life with You if we accept your Son Jesus the Christ as Saviour and Lord. Now I ask that you allow the Holy Spirit to move in this place, within our hearts, heads and hands so that we may grow stronger in our walk, and our talk. Help us Abba, to be the people you called us to be. In the name of your Son we pray. Amen and Amen.

I GOT TO DO BETTER!

I wish to suggest to us that our failure to do better is a moral struggle. See, if we accept that God is all that God is; and God has done all that God has done then that

means that God is in charge of us. God has the right to tell us how to live; God has the right to expect certain things of us and this poses a moral struggle.

Let me try again. To my KS Jr. You may have some rules at home that you just do not wish to follow: make your bed, brush your hair and your teeth, put on some clothes before you come in the kitchen. These rules could be considered the moral fabric of your family. But how often do you disobey them; how often do you take shortcuts; how often do you promise to do better tomorrow. Your failure to obey is a disregard for those who provide for you. It is like telling them – your parents, adult guardian – that what you say is of no consequence to me. You are not the boss of me. But KS Jr. You are incorrect. Those who care for you and about you are the boss of you until you have demonstrated the ability to be boss of yourself. Your new statement needs to be **I GOT TO DO BETTER and I will start today. Did someone ask why? Because the Bible tells me so.**

¹² *“Honor your father and your mother,
so that you may live long in the land
the LORD your God is giving you. (Exodus 20 NIV)*

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

² *“Honor your father and mother”—
which is the first commandment with a promise—
³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”
(Ephesians 6)*

To my older KS many of the ways of the world are very attractive and if we are not on our guard they will attract us and turn us away from God. Now someone might be thinking I am here, what is she talking about? Are you really here or just passing through? Are you reading your bible, participating in a bible study, studying to show yourself approved to God? Or is church just a meet and greet before Sunday lunch? Has declaring that God is your Saviour and Lord changed your walk, your talk – the places you go and the things you say – the people you hang with and the things you post on social media. Just because you can't find God's Facebook page does not mean He is not looking at yours. Where are the places where you need to declare: I GOT TO DO BETTER?

To all the rest of us: it is so easy to get jaded and stop looking at the world with awe and wonder. It is easy to say that I can't make a difference. It is comfortable in our velvet ruts of "it has always been done this way" – "if it's not broke why fix it" – "my way or the highway". But if God is God and our Lord and Saviour then we need to take advice from Him. To fail to follow His advice, His instructions and His commands is to declare that He is not your God and He is not the boss of you. We also need a battle cry I GOT TO DO BETTER.

Let's see if I can tie this altogether for you. When it is cold, praise God, for the cold helps the seeds to germinate for flowers in the Spring. When spring comes praise Him for the budding of the trees and the greening of the grass for it is God at work preparing for the next season. During the summer, we often travel to see the wonders created by God. Mountains and oceans, tall trees and bushes that have been shaped by the wind. Great holes in the ground and ever ending streams of water. With fall comes with it comes the rewards of our labor and we gather the harvest, but remember we only plant and weed, God provides the water and the harvest.

Our lives ought to follow similar patterns praising God during every season, during the good and the bad; the calm and the storm; the abundance and the scarcity. I encourage you during the coming week to read all of Psalms 104 and ask God to show you where you

GOT TO DO BETTER!

Benediction

Eph. 3:20-21 – Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.