

‘What God’s works say about God’

Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ

Blessed be the Lord whose unfailing love for me was wonderful. – Ps.31,21

Collect:

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Increase and multiply upon us your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever and ever. Amen

Look forward in faith -
all time is in God’s hand.
Walk humbly with him
and trust his future plan.
God has wisely led
his people by his power.
Look forward in hope,
he gives us each new day.

Look forward in faith -
the world is in God’s care.
His purpose of love
he calls on us to share.
In our neighbour’s need,
the Lord is present still.
He blesses the meek!
The earth will know God’s will.

Look forward in faith -
God gives us life each day.
Go onward with Christ,
his Spirit guides our way.
Now God lets us live
within the sphere of grace.
Trust ever in him –

he rules o'er earth and space!

A. Scobie

Ps.145, 10-18

Dear friends

Reading these words of Psalm 145 we come face to face with an important principle. It is one that makes sense, is straightforward and clear, however, it is also and at the same time easily overlooked and much neglected. The principle is this: Statements about God are best made on the strength of his own works.

The more this principle is lacking in our thinking and speaking about/of God, the more distant from the truth it all becomes, the more distant from the truth we all become. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that the thinking of our own times, which has largely divorced itself from this principle some time ago, refuses to expect any statement about God to be true and its denial or opposite not to be true. Though this may not be surprising because it is so generally acknowledged, it is nevertheless a very strange state of affairs when you think about it. Because what is a God who is not true and truly living: he is but an idol, a nothing, who may look like something but can do no more than nothing can. The only thing an idol can do is to be considered to be true for someone but not true for someone else. In regard to the true and living God this is an impossibility.

Now the works of God are a delight to those who behold them and they lead them to praise the One whose works they are. And they share what they see in the mode of praising God, so that others may join in the praise and see and know. Because to know God as He displays himself in His works, acknowledging His praiseworthiness, is for man to know himself in the place described in v.18: "*The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*" [It's like being in the palace and having the king's ear all the time.]

What are these works? Well, certainly we are justified and right to think here first of the works of creation. They tell of the power of God whereby He imposed order on chaos such that life arose and is enabled to flourish and which gave the light necessary for life to know the way. This order surely is reflected within us in our ability and impulse to trace its workings in nature and praise the Creator, and in our sense of right and wrong, light and darkness, meaning and fulfilment, in the voice within of natural justice and the conscience. They tell of Him whose works they are, and they invite all of us to see and hear and to draw near Him in praise and to call on Him.

I recently heard someone speak about a place by the Firth of Forth (Cockenzie), saying that she would defy anyone watching the sunset from that spot to remain unmoved and not believe in God. She understood well that creation is the work of God which is making a statement about Him and that there is an organ within us with which to hear and see. But, of course, such seeing and hearing does not happen necessarily. The story can be told in different ways. It is, as David says, "*the faithful people that extol you.*"

For example, we recently watched a program about the planets in our solar system, and it struck me how different the account there presented was from the one I had read about in a book on the matter not long before. One account made no reference to God, the other did. Same facts, same science, different story. The account which made reference to God spoke of the facts in ways that

brought out the intentional and purposeful will of God to enable life, especially life that would be able to know Him and enjoy true fellowship with Him. The story so told made sense of our search for meaning, of the grip the idea of purpose has on us, and of the presence everywhere we look of intentionality and order. And all leads to a joy otherwise not known but recognised in the soul as supremely fitting, as the joy it has always sought – the joy of delight in the Creator and of the praise of Him.

But from considering the works of creation we must move on and consider the works of God by which we come to know Him as *our God and ourselves as his people*, the works by which we come to know His help and own His promises, the works by which we come to trust and obey His will for us and receive grace, love and fellowship with Him.

This, dear friends, takes us to the life and person of Jesus Christ. Because if we look anywhere for God at work in this way, where do we see it but in him? Indeed, Jesus himself raises this question on the basis of his works before those who deemed him a fraud: *“Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any good work,’ they replied, ‘but for blasphemy because you, a mere man, claim to be God.’ Jesus answered them, ‘...Why do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”* (Jn.10,31-38)

What work of God tells us that God is *“trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does”*, so that those who see and hear it learn to live by what it tells? Is it not everything that makes up the life of Jesus Christ and shows him to be the fulfilment of the promises given to Israel?

What work of God tells us that God *“upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down”*, so that all who see and hear it find such help and mercy? Look at Christ’s compassion and forgiving love and healing with which he reached out to lost sinners, always to restore them; look at his cross where he died for the sins of the world and at his resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit to assure every sinner who believes of God’s forgiveness and of their restoration to everlasting life.

What work of God tells us of Him such that we look to him to give and open his hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing? Do we not see it in the one who fed the 5000 with a couple of fish and a few loaves of bread?

What work of God tells us that He is *“near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth”*, so that all who hear and see it know that he is with them and they are with him and nothing can separate them from his love? Do we not see it in Christ Jesus who was betrayed to the cross and left alone by his disciples and after his resurrection gathered them and called them his *friends* and who said to them and to all who in faith receive him, *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”* (Mt.28,20)?

Dear friends, we know God in his power, his love and faithfulness, when we know him by his works. Let us drink deeply from the source that reveals God’s saving work most fully, even Jesus Christ.

AMEN

- time of prayer / intercession – [we give thanks for God’s mercy and faithfulness, for the compassion and steadfast love he has for all that he has made, that all his judgments are just and

righteous, that he is our refuge and the helper of all who call to him; we pray for those who have become ill, are fighting illness or are recovering from it, for those who care for the needs of others; for those in positions of leadership and authority: that they may rule wisely and seek peace, that they may guard the values by which a society can flourish, that they may lead with courage and wisdom, for a turning to the light that is God's Word; for those who have lost loved ones, need comfort into their grieving and the loving presence of friends; we give thanks for all the help we have received and still experience, for grace and answered prayers; we pray for the despondent and the hopeless, for those who seek light, for the wisdom to comfort the suffering; we pray for our sister church in Northern India and for the body of Christ worldwide and here, for our church, the church's leadership; we think of the situation in India, Nepal and other places, the suffering of the people there and elsewhere, the attempt of the authorities to regain control; we give thanks for the help that is being delivered; we pray for the situation in Israel, the rift between the Palestinians and the Jews; for perseverance in the determination to share our means with those who lack them; we pray for God's blessing on the preaching and teaching of His word, for people to respond in repentance and faith, for freedom and liberty and courage to stand for what is good and true and honours His name;]

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

Now may the peace of God which passes all our understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you. AMEN
