

Pentecost 13 / September 7, 2025

Psalm 104

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

You Send Forth Your Spirit and They are Created

Psalm 104 is a celebration of the glory of God expressed in the creation of the earth and the life of the world. The faith of Israel began with the knowledge that God is the Creator of heaven, earth and all that is in them. The ancient world had many stories of creation, but they were often limited by the threat of chaos. In the ancient near east the prevailing belief was that the forces of creation and the forces of chaos were locked in a perpetual struggle for supremacy. Sometimes creation would prevail and there would be life. Sometimes chaos would triumph and there would be death. No matter what form these particular stories took the underlying message was the same, be afraid for darkness, death and destruction are never far away. And while it is true that darkness, death and destruction are part of life, the Hebrew story of creation showed that everything including these, are under the power and control of the Creator. And most importantly, the Creator cares for all that His hands have made. As St. Paul said in the letter to the Romans, *"we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

Unlike other ancient creation stories, in the biblical story of creation there is no one present and active but God. Genesis says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* God creates through his Word, without a hint of opposition by any outside force. There is no one and nothing but God, until God says the word. God said, *"Let there be light," and there was light.* It was that simple. The underlying message of other creation stories was fear, but the plain message of the biblical story was that there is nothing to fear. God is the Creator against whom no opposition can stand. And most importantly for the people of Israel, the Creator was their God who promised to care for and keep them in life and death. The week as we know it was given to the ancient Hebrews, so they would remember each day and every week that God was the Creator and He would keep them and the world safe in the kindness of His love. Each day they would remember a different aspect of His creation. On the seventh day they would remember that human beings were the crowning glory of His creation and that God's steadfast love endures forever.

The week serves the same purpose in the Christian era, but with one big difference. That difference is Jesus our Saviour. Ancient Israel worshipped on the seventh day, the Saturday, for it says in Genesis, *"God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation."* Every Saturday Israel remembered their Creator and His work of creation. Every Sunday Christians remember our Creator and the new creation He is making in Christ Jesus. In Revelation the divine voice cries out: *"Behold, I am making all things new."* On Sunday Christ rose from the dead as the first-fruits of the new creation. In His death Christ defeated the forces of chaos. In His resurrection He showed His great power, that nothing not even death can stand against Him. Each Sunday we remember His resurrection and the promise given to us in our baptism of participating in the new creation, in our share of His resurrection from the dead. Ours is a story of creation, preservation and recreation. In Christ, God sends forth His Spirit and fills us with good things; faith, forgiveness and eternal life.

According to the creation story prevalent in the world today, we came from nothing and eventually we will return to the same. A popular series on television a number of years ago was called "Life After People." It imagined what the world would be like if human beings suddenly and completely disappeared. Each episode showed how the earth would carry on just fine without us, as one by one the monuments of our genius would fall into disrepair and return to the dust. The premise of the show is that we are not as important as we think. And furthermore, the earth would be better off without us. More and more this is what our culture believes. How things have changed! It wasn't too long ago that most people believed in God and took it seriously when He said creation was very good, only after He had created human beings in his image and placed them at the heart of His creation. It wasn't too long ago that human beings thought of themselves as special in the earth and in the heart of God. Now we think we are not that important after all. We sense that just like the dinosaurs, our days too could be numbered.

Psalms 104 is a creation song. It celebrates God's glory as it is displayed in the creation of the earth, the giving of life to all things living and God's work of renewing and sustaining the life of the world. Against the backdrop of fear and uncertainty inspired by pagan stories of creation and chaos, the psalmist declares, *"He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved."* Against the backdrop of the world's current creation story that says we are nothing and going nowhere, the psalmist affirms God's continuing creative presence in the world

singing, *"You cause grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart."* This song of creation tells us that we are important to God. He wants us in His world. In fact, His world is only complete because human beings are at the heart of it. We are something special. We are God's creation. Another psalmist sang: *"What are human beings that you are mindful of them? Yet you have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour."* We have a place in His heart and a purpose in His creation.

Our culture once believed in God. The American Declaration of Independence spoke about America as a nation under God. The British and all members of the commonwealth prayed for God to save our king or queen. But that cultural belief in a providential God seems to be rapidly eroding. Not too many years ago a song called "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" was a major hit. It was a hit, because it expressed what a sizeable majority of people believed; that there is a good and gracious God, who holds the world in existence. But now more people seem to believe we are nothing but dust in the wind, a speck of dust in the universe, which could be quickly annihilated by the next passing comet. This is something new. The ancient pagans, for all the fear behind their creation stories, at least believed there was a Creator. Our culture at this particular time, is rapidly losing that sense of a beneficent Creator.

The psalmists certainly believed in God. They couldn't imagine the world without Him, because they knew the world only exists in him. The ancient Greeks, who knew nothing of the God of Israel, still sensed His presence in the creation. One of their poets sang, *"In Him we live and move and have our being."* Another echoed him saying, *"We are His offspring."* The author of this psalm saw God in creation because God had revealed himself to Israel in His word. He sang, *"O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Here is the sea, great and wide, which teems with creatures innumerable...These all look to you to give them their food in due season."* When God gives food to His creatures they live and move and have their being. When God hides His face, death comes and takes their breath away. Nevertheless, death does not have the final say. God continually sends His Spirit to renew the face of the earth. The psalmist sings, *"When you send forth your Spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the ground."* These words assure us the God of creation can be depended upon to sustain the earth He created and renew the life of the

creatures he called into being by His powerful word. The greatest renewal of life comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps people are more inclined to disbelieve in the Creator because they sense the world is wearing out. We have in truth polluted almost every square inch of this planet. We are told that our carbon output will be the death of us all one day. We are told we are running out of natural resources and that the end is almost in sight. And in truth, no matter how vast their reserves, natural resources such as coal and oil exist in a limited quantity. Nothing in the universe lasts forever and in time even our sun will run out of fuel, fail and die. But as this psalm teaches it is not the sun that gives life to the world, it is God who gives every living thing its food in due season and who sends forth His Spirit to renew the earth. In His word, God who created the universe, our world and all that is in it says that when the time is fully come, He will again say the word and make all things new. He has already given us the most certain sign of this in the resurrection of His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The most certain sign of God's continual steadfast love is the giving of Jesus into our world. God's loves this world and every human soul who lives in it so much that in Christ, He became one with us. The world may well be running down, but God's love for us will never run out or be depleted. The Gospels tell us that in the beginning God created through the Word and that without the Word nothing was made that has been made. The Gospels tell us that when the world became estranged from God through sin that He began the work of recreating by making His Word flesh and giving Him into death on the cross that we might be reconciled to Him in forgiveness and peace. Through the Word, God gives the Holy Spirit that our hearts might be opened to receive Jesus through the gift of faith. In this faith we know that God will continue to care for us until He renews and restores creation to the place it had with Him in the beginning. Every Sunday we remember the words of St. Peter who spoke of the recreation in Christ Jesus saying, *"But in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth the home of righteousness."* Ours is a faith of creation and recreation in Christ Jesus.

Gracious God, *"the eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."* Continue to send forth your Spirit into the earth and preserve all living things. Continue to send your Spirit into the world that through the hearing of the Gospel, the hearts of men, women and children may be opened to gift of your love in Jesus the Saviour. Care for and keep our lives in this world until the day you restore creation

to the glory it had with you in the beginning. In Jesus' Name Amen.

Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen