

## SERMON FOR FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ST DAVID'S, CHURCH, BURNSIDE

16 JUNE 2024

Let's think about the notion of giving God the glory. When should we do that and why? What does giving God the glory mean ?

*"Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory" (Psalm 115:1)! Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*

So the psalmist stipulates that the company of God's people give glory to God's name. This is because God's name is his identity. It encompasses his power, prestige, his supreme place - according to the psalmist - in the pantheon of gods. The glory and praise given to the Lord's name by the worshipping community is because it is his underlying benevolence that sustains the community. Because they realise the capabilities of the community are proven to be weaker and therefore subordinate to God's capabilities. To give glory to the name of God is to honour him.

The Matthew text more clearly relates to the Christian character we reveal when doing good works. These good works, this 'light', Matthew explains, should be offered to the glory of God for the same reasons the psalmist puts forward. The quotes from Psalm 115 and Matthew 5 stimulate us to know that whatever we do, presumably what is good, right, and proper, is done because God has fashioned us by the ministry of the Holy Spirit to do what is good, right, and proper. When we talk, if we ever do, about the gifts we possess, we acknowledge what the Holy Spirit, the breath and life force of God has gifted us. *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of the heavenly lights."* James 1.17

Everyone who does good in whatever field of human endeavour they undertake is exercising the gifts God has given them. God has gifted those who acknowledge him and those who don't. So let's focus on the the breath of life given to all living creatures, but in particular to humankind. *"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."* Genesis 2.7

The relationship between God and his creation, but principally of man and woman is symbolised in the 'Garden of Eden' in which God walked in the cool of the day and took great pleasure in it. The Garden is also the place where that relationship was strained, one might even say broken. The writer of this account of creation (Genesis 2 & 3) is giving an explanation why the change in relationship occurred and its consequences. Banishment from the Garden to toil and labour for their life's goodness.

How does giving God the glory fit with this changed relationship? To understand why this is possible we turn to the writers of the books of the Old and New Testaments

Did the writers of the Old and New Testament books write their answer to this question before, during, or after the events recorded in each book? *"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,"* That's an easy one to provide an answer for. Obviously the writer of

Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 wrote after the event. And how did the authors of the subsequent books of the bible decide God was at work in the fabric of the community, in both the Hebrew and foreign tribes and nations?

From 1 Samuel 15 we hear of David being chosen to replace King Saul - where would you place God in the story? *"Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' 'And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we shall not sit down until he comes here.' He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.'"*

Was God standing looking over Samuel's shoulder, or is the author of the story giving an explanation of how David was chosen? Was the author present to quote first hand from personal observation? That's my question as I try to understand the operation of God in the world of human beings and kingdoms.

How do we discern God's involvement in the events of the world's community today and in the affairs of individual people, those close to us and ourselves? How would we write an account of God's involvement?

Discerning God's involvement is important, how else can we give glory to God when events surprise us with joy?

It's more likely that we will know if God has been at work with us after the event. I say this because it's what I have experienced.

A principle example is the detection of a melanoma twenty five years ago. I went to the doctor for a completely different reason and while there I asked him to check some moles on my back. There it was for him to see. A melanoma! After the excision and the biopsy results I began a very lengthy period of coping knowing that I had a potentially life ending skin cancer and that, based on research, nor doubted my strong belief I could expect another sometime in the future.

When it became possible for me to see beyond the shock of having a melanoma, of having a cancer, I began to marvel at its chance discovery and the positive result of catching it early. But that raised a question I still haven't been able to answer. Yes, I believe God had had a hand in its chance discovery but why doesn't that happen to others? I have never ever regretted being saved by the discerning eye of the doctor nor by subsequent strong belief that God had a hand in it. He had work for me to do. That is what I have to say about it. That is why I give glory to God.

But God's part in guiding our life is I believe a whole of life experience and not a series of individual events even those some are quite distinctive. Experienced or not God is at work in us full time. So giving God the glory should become a full time expression by us, something of a habit. The gloria in excelsis, when we come to it in this service, is the time to be conscious of the abiding and sustaining power of God undergirding our lives yesterday, today, and into the future.

Fr John

Saturday 15 June 2024