

## “Enduring Fire: Praising a Faithful God – Creation and Provision

### **Scripture: Psalm 104:24-35**

Graphic: fire, hands raised, life, offering, worship, creation, Holy Spirit

Key Verses: 30 (But) When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

Theme: God’s Spirit has the power to create and renew and provide. First, we are created, and then our second creation is salvation in Jesus Christ.

### **1) Introduction**

- a) As most of you know, Joe Osborne and I spent the better part of this past week at Annual Conference in Rochester...
- b) And there were some really great times...and some really painful times as a church of Jesus Christ...
  - i) Certainly, being ordained was something pretty special and a day I will never forget...
  - ii) We talked about the business of the Annual Conference like budgets and shared ministry formulas and Safe Sanctuaries policy...
  - iii) Then there was the Africa University Choir – let me just tell you that despite all the things about Annual Conference that I find painful theologically and procedurally, to stand and join about 20 young people from Africa, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, and eager to sing about the presence of God and the hope for the future, there is hope because Jesus Christ is MOVING. God is MOVING on the continent of Africa and people’s lives are being transformed. And we sang and praised God with this choir...the saving grace of this Conference, in my opinion.
  - iv) There was great time with friends and colleagues, and we met some new people and found out about new ministries and ways that people’s lives are being transformed and ways to be God’s love to our neighbors in all places.
  - v) And lastly, we had several hours of debate and discussion about our understanding of human sexuality. This is a difficult topic...and it will continue to me. What we all concluded is that we, as an Annual Conference, are deeply divided and it comes down to an issue of authority of scripture. The petitions that were passed by this Annual

Conference to be recommended for General Conference next year were to affirm same-sex unions, to ordain practicing homosexual persons, and to remove language from the Book of Discipline that states homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.

vi) Now, none of those petitions hold any weight until they are approved by General Conference, which is the only body that can change church polity. If anyone has questions about that, you can talk with Joe or me later...

c) Yet, in the midst of all that, I found myself running to get closer to the enduring fire of God. I didn't agree with every decision that was made by the people around me. Joe and I didn't like some of the ways that the Annual Conference voted to suggest redefinition of marriage, human sexuality, and ordaining homosexual clergy.

d) Joe and I found ourselves frustrated, disappointed, and even angry at times...

e) And so we found ourselves longing - wanting desperately - to be renewed...re-created...re-provisioned...

f) And in the power of God's Spirit at Pentecost, those things are found...

g) And the foundation for the renewing creation and provision of the Holy Spirit is God's desire for us to be whole and complete, as He created us...

h) Enduring Fire, praising a faithful God...

i) Let's retreat into the Word of God...Psalm 104...

j) Let's pray...

## **2) Scripture**

### **a) Read verses 24-26**

i) Look back to verses 1-23. The whole of Psalm 104 is a mind-blowing list of all the things that God created...

(1)v. 2 – He created LIGHT; v. 3 – clouds; v. 4 wind; v. 5 – earth; v. 6 – water, mountains; v. 11 – animals; v. 12 – birds; v. 14 – grass for the cattle and plants for man; the list goes on and on...

- ii) The LORD (YHWH – the One true God) had created them ALL
- iii) All of the lands and the earth and the animals and the water ...
- iv) Including (in verse 23) humans, who go out to there work...
- v) How MANY are your works? Can we even count them?? The earth in FULL of your creatures...
- vi) AND...AND that's not even to mention the sea – with ALL the creatures in the sea. We don't even KNOW how many species are in the sea...and new ones get discovered every year!
- vii) And, along with creatures large and small...I love this, God made Leviathan – sea monster, so that God could watch it frolic! The pagan culture that surrounded Israel viewed the sea – the ocean - as the thing that God needed to tame and destroy in order for life to exist!
- viii) The psalmist says, “Even the thing that is most feared – Leviathan - and the thing you think needs to be destroyed is the CREATION of THIS LORD. In FACT, LORD created this scary monster in order for sport...frolic...play! It is in His control...
- ix) THIS God is God that created it all...and is LORD OVER all.
- x) This creation – this nature – includes all creatures, and humans, and is a display of God's wisdom.
- xi) As we look at creation from the perspective of this psalm, we realize that this is a faithful view of creation. And I say that because if God made everything there is as a display of His WISDOM, then by FAITH:
  - (1) Nature is a reason for joyous praise! We can lift our hands and praise God because of creation and the wisdom and power that is displayed.
  - (2) Nature, by faith, is recognition of the absolute dependence on God for food, for life, and for provision.
  - (3) Look at verse 27...

**b) Read verses 27-30**

- i) And because God has created all these things and they are not independent, God is continuing to provide for them all...
- ii) And ALL the creatures of the earth depend on God – first for creation, right? And then for provision...
- iii) When God gives...they gather it up!
- iv) When God opens His hand, they are satisfied.
- v) And this isn't just true of animals and birds and fish that need food and shelter...this isn't just true of grass and trees which need sunlight and nutrients.
- vi) This is true of HUMANS as well. When God provides – when God gives – we gather it up. We are satisfied!
- vii) But when we are always searching for the next pile of stuff in our lives and ignoring the abundance that God has provided, we become discontent...we become greedy...we become unsatisfied.
- viii) When God provides, we are satisfied.
- ix) But look at verse 29...just like we are satisfied when God provides, we wither when God is not providing.
- x) When we step away from the enduring fire of God, or there is something blocking the heat and the light, we are terrified. And when God allows us to go through these times, we get scared. And even when God allows our breath to leave us – to allow us, and the creatures around us to die, it is in God's hands.
- xi) Now, there are two uses of a Hebrew word here – ruach. In the first usage in verse 29, the psalmist is referring to the breath of creatures and humans. This ruach is our life...it's our breath of life. Without this ruach, we're dead.
- xii) BUT, look at verse 30, When you send your ruach of God, your SPIRIT – the Holy Spirit, they (the creatures and all things) are created. AND, when you send your RUACH, God, you renew the face of the earth.

- xiii) When you send your Spirit, there is creation – all those things created in God’s wisdom.
- xiv) AND, there is renewal. Everyone in favor of renewal, raise your hand...
- xv) In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came with a MIGHTY wind, and the tongues of FIRE (nothing gentle or mamby-pamby about it), two things happened. There was creation: God created the something NEW in the world – a new WAY of experiencing the presence of Christ – through His Spirit.
- xvi) AND there was RENEWAL and PROVISION. God took this defeated, lost, and hurting group of people that had, for a second time, seen Christ leave them, and INFUSED INTO THEM A FIRE THAT BEGAN TO BURN ON THAT DAY. And He provided the church with the ultimate resource of the Holy Spirit to guide and protect and inform them of the truth.
- xvii) God’s creation happens by the power of the Spirit.
- xviii) God’s provision happens by the power of the Spirit.
- xix) God’s re-creation in your life is by the POWER of the Holy Spirit...but you have to stay near the enduring fire of God.
- xx) And the creation isn’t simply a physical creation...it’s a spiritual one. When you stand close to that enduring fire, the Holy Spirit creates in you an awareness and desire to understand and use your spiritual gifts.
- xxi) And the provision and renewal isn’t simply physical...it’s spiritual. When you invite the Holy Spirit to be in you, then you are renewed as a born-again child of God.
- xxii) The Spirit of God is the source of life in every sense that the word “Life” can have – it’s creation of life itself, it’s renewal of a life that’s been broken, and it’s provision of life for use in the building of God’s kingdom.
- xxiii) And our response is to praise God! Look at verse 31...

**c) Read verses 31-35**

- i) Our response is to praise a Faithful God for creation and provision.
- ii) Because we have life – praise God. Sing TO the Lord.
- iii) Because God is powerful and strong, sing praise to God.
- iv) May my meditation – my devotion – be pleasing to God, as I rejoice – for creation and provision – in the Lord.
- v) Now – look at verse 35. The lectionary, which guides the suggested scriptures, leaves out the first part of verse 35. So, basically, we'd go from praising God in verse 34, to Bless the Lord, O my soul, Praise the LORD. And because I don't always do what others tell me to do, let's look at the first part of verse 35...
- vi) In the beginning part of verse 35, we have this shocking phrase – Let sinners be consumed from the earth, let the wicked be no more!
- vii) And, at first, that just doesn't fit in with this praise. But let me ask you a question: If you had the choice and could do it...would you rather HAVE sin and wickedness in the world or would you NOT?
- viii) I think we'd all choose to get rid of sin and wickedness, right?
- ix) The psalmist here is not attempting to get God to just simply wipe out all sin from the earth...the psalmist has just finished talking about ALL that God has created – this vast and awesome world and all the creatures IN IT, and the author has given allegiance to God and has rightly stated that ALL living things are dependent on God, AND has given praise because God's Spirit is the agent for it all!
- x) And just like our lives, when we get to a place in worship or discipleship or mission when we are THAT CLOSE to being filled with the Holy Spirit creating and renewing God's will in our lives, we realize that sin STILL exists and that wickedness still exists in this life, in our lives, and in the world around us.
- xi) And the desire of our hearts would be for God to take that away so that we can be freed to be squarely in God's will...and that God would take away the barriers of wickedness so we don't have to deal with it.

- xii) And when Jesus comes back, all that will be a reality. And creation will be perfectly complete. And provision and renewal will be perfectly offered and accepted in our lives.
- xiii) But we are not there yet...and sin still exists. The desire of our hearts, though is that the Spirit of God will continue with its work in the world.
- xiv) Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord.

### **3) Application**

- a) The Holy Spirit creates. Be part of the process of creation in the world. “Create in me a clean heart O God”. The Holy Spirit at work in you creates a clean and blameless heart when you accept Jesus as Son of God, Savior of the World, and Lord of All.
- b) The Holy Spirit provides. Be part of what God is providing – for your life and those around you who are in need of provision. See where God is working and join Him there. God provides for the church through provision and use of spiritual gifts...find out what yours are and use them.
- c) The Holy Spirit re-creates. Allow the Holy Spirit of Pentecost to come into your life again today. Actively invite Christ’s Spirit to take that which is dead in you – a passion for Him...a willingness to listen to the Spirit’s voice – whatever it is in your life and re-create.
- d) Get serious about inviting the Holy Spirit to be present in your life because it’s the power to create and provide for you.

### **4) Conclusion**

- a) Safety and security. Life and purpose. Strength and power. Creation and provision.
- b) Those are the ways that God works in our lives when we invite the enduring fire to burn close to us. Because of Jesus, those are available and God is waiting to give you more of them.
- c) For that, we praise our faithful God.
- d) As we wrap up this sermon series next weekend, we will add triumph and victory.

- e) As I watched the Africa University choir members sing with passion about a faithful God, I wanted to join them. The tears rolled down my face as they sang about Jesus. They sang about the fact that the Holy Spirit is not done saving and providing...and how, as the Holy Spirit comes down, Africa will be saved.
- f) As the Holy Spirit comes, not only will Africa be saved, but all creation will be reconciled to God. And we will raise our hands in praise for eternity.
- g) Stay close to the enduring fire of God and the Holy Spirit comes on you like a mighty wind and holy fire.
- h) Let's pray...