

The Manifold Works of the Lord

Psalm 104:24

Man's existence may seem to be routinely mundane, but, in fact, it is resplendent and majestic. **"Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening"** (Psalm 104:23). Sounds pretty routine, eh? But then, notice the contrast with the very next verse, **"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."** (Psalm 104:24) At one time or another, we are all tempted to think of our lives as humdrum, dull, dismal, routine, or even boring. But when we feel that way, we are failing to focus on the many works of the Lord. We fail to see the marks of God's holy blessings in every human being.

Perhaps you have heard the words of the Italian ditch digger who said, "I digga the ditch, to getta the money, to buya the food, to have the strength to digga the ditch." Isn't that the way life feels sometimes?

The Context of Psalm 104

Psalm 104 contains a catalog of consummate creativity. Beginning with the words, **"Bless the Lord, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great..."** The psalmist goes on to depict the wonders of creation. Consider the compendium in Psalm 104: He stretched out the heavens the way you might spread a curtain or a bedspread. The next time you drive by a building under construction, remember that the Lord laid the foundations of the earth in the waters. He made the swiftly moving clouds like His chariot. He created angels. He brought forth a flood upon the earth that covered the mountains; He covered them with the same ease that you use a hose to fill a pail of water. The Lord dismissed the floods back to their chambers and set a boundary upon the shorelines so that the waters may not cover the earth again. But He does send springs of water, cascading down the hills to quench the thirst of man and beast. His waters from above sprinkle the grateful earth below and they bring forth food at His command. Grass for the grazing cattle, meat for our meals and fruits and grains for our feasts all come from the Lord. Every creature has his home in the hills or safely swaying in the tops of the trees. And far above it all, the Lord appointed the moon and the sun to mark the seasons and the days: the very same seasons and days that we think of as routine and mundane! And yet it is in the midst of this structural, seasonal, natural ritual that we see the portrayal of God's glory.

Being a Created Human Being

In the midst of this great creation stands God's greatest creation: mankind. **"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."** (Psalm 104:24). Men and women were made in the image of God in order to have a personal relationship with God. In this verse, the psalmist appeals, "O LORD" using the personal name of God. Majestically, human beings were designed to rationally, spiritually and emotionally interact with God Himself! This is the wonder of God's great wisdom. The psalmist cried out, "how manifold [or how many] are Your works!" Just from the brief list at the beginning of Psalm 104, we get a glimmer of how many. The psalmist continued, **"in wisdom You had made them all: the earth is full of Your riches."** There is no greater exhibition of God's wisdom and riches than the human beings He has made. For the next few minutes, consider the wonder of being a created human being. Commenting on David's thoughts in

Psalm 139:17-18, one author wrote, "Even in [the psalmist's] own body (13ff.) there is an unimaginable wealth of detail, every point of it from the mind of God."ⁱ

Breath

Take a deep breath of God's good air. In Daniel 5:23, Daniel reminded King Belshazzar that God held the king's breath in His hand. God holds or controls each breath of every one of us. ⁱⁱ The lungs of an adult can hold no more than 6 liters of air. (That's the amount of space in 3 two liter pop bottles.) It has been estimated that you take about 20,000 breaths each day; that's 7.3 million breaths per year. Each day, you breathe about 4,000 gallons of air, but if you dwell in a city area, your air is full of foreign particles; it's been estimated that you breathe in 20 billion foreign particles per day, including smoke, dust, mold spores, pollen, etc. So how do you keep from choking on all those particles?

You have an amazing respiratory system that includes moistened projections that look like hairs, but are called "cilia." These cilia contain goblet cells which secrete mucus, and this moisture helps you capture those microscopic particles and microorganisms. Your body comes with the ability to cough up these particles and pathogens and spit them out. But what if you swallow them? What happens to those billions of dangerous, swallowed particles? The gastric juices in your stomach include hydrochloric acid which dissolve them so that they pass harmlessly out of your system. And we've barely begun to describe your amazing respiratory system. But remember that God holds your breath in His hand. We can say with the psalmist, ***"O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."*** (Psalm 104:24).

Blood

The great transportation system in your body is called the circulatory system. The remarkable pump that keeps it going is the heart. 55% of what it transports is plasma, a clear liquid made up of 90% water that contains salts and minerals such as calcium and potassium. But the most important thing that the plasma carries along are your living blood cells: red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets and antibodies. Those red blood cells are way better than DoorDash®. They carry great food to every other cell, organ and system in your body. But then on the return trip, they carry away your garbage. (Should we call them "Garbage-Go?") They carry away waste products filtered out by your organs such as the liver and the kidneys. But these red blood cells wear another hat. Not only do they deliver your food and carry away your garbage, they also don their medical uniforms and bring you life-giving oxygen (without the tanks!) And while they are there, they collect the carbon dioxide and carry it away before it kills you. And don't forget the white blood cells that staff the emergency room and the ICU. They move quickly to attack dangerous bacteria and other pathogens that could end your life if they were left unchecked. One of my favorite white blood cells is called "phagocyte." These act like a cross between hospital security and muscular orderlies. These are powerful blobs that engulf and wrap up those nasty little terrorist pathogens and then jump onto the circulatory system to carry that junk right out of your body. And we haven't even talked about platelets. Kids get really fascinated by super heroes such as Spiderman®. But as you know, that web-slinger is a fantasy. But here is the reality. Blood cells called platelets rush to the site of any injury in the body and they shoot out their web of tentacles to form a net. This keeps other cells from escaping through the breach. Perhaps you have heard the story of "The Little Dutch Boy" written by an American who had no knowledge of

dams and dikes. Supposedly this little boy saved the town by putting his finger in a break in the dike, and saved the town from flooding. (It would have never worked, by the way. A break in the dam or dike could never be stopped by a finger.) But here are your platelets that act like a cross between the web-slinger and the little dutch boy. They rush to the surface of your skin or to a break in those high-pressure hoses that we call arteries and veins and they block the flow with those protein strands of webbing. Pretty amazing, huh? What are we learning? **“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.”** (Psalm 104:24). Stop to ponder the many works of God in your own body!

Muscles

Are you sitting down? If so, you are sitting on your largest muscle, the gluteus maximus. It moves the thighbone away from the body, and no, I'm not pulling your leg. But where is the smallest muscle in your body? It is the stapedius muscle in the middle ear. It is thinner than a piece of thread and about 5/100 of an inch in length. The Lord made these muscles with wisdom that helps you and me sit and listen to a message from God's Word.

Womb

Now if you really want to talk about super heroes, it would be hard to beat the wonder that we call the womb. One writer called it, “Wonder Wombⁱⁱⁱ”; it beats the fictional WonderWoman® all to pieces. The placenta in the human womb nourishes the baby with the ultimate life support equipment. It acts as a heart-lung machine and filters the fluids like a liver and kidney while that precious little one is growing in the womb. Would you agree with the psalmist who wrote, **“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.”** (Psalm 104:24).

In the Beginning

Our newest medical instruments, such as the ultrasound, have helped us to begin to understand the mysteries of human conception, the fetal development of a baby, and birth. Even those who deny the existence of God or hold to a belief in evolution are compelled to call this process a miracle. If you've never watched a video such as “Miracle of Life – 9 months in 4 minutes” then it's time to watch it and share it with others.^{iv} Combining the DNA of the mother and the father, the embryo rapidly multiplies cells that begin to form the highly specialized organs so essential for life.

In the Declaration of Independence, the founders of our country wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men...” This is why Ohio legislators have recently proposed House Bill 704 which specifies that personhood, with all the legal rights that pertain to it, begin at conception. When you see statements such as this, remember the words of the psalmist: **“O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.”** (Psalm 104:24).

God Became a Human Being

At the beginning of Genesis, the Creation account makes it plain that men and women were made in the image of God: **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them”** (Genesis 1:27). But an even greater miracle is that God became a human being. As expressed in Hebrews 10, **“Wherefore when He came into the world, He said ... a body have You prepared me ... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”** (Hebrews 10:5,10). Does God place a high value on humanity? God sets such a high value on humanity that He allowed His Son to be victimized by the horrors of sinful humanity. Jesus Christ lived the perfect life. Judas, who betrayed Him, screamed, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4). The repentant thief on the cross said of Jesus, “And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss [wrong]” (Luke 23:41). Jesus endured agony and gave up His breath and His blood for you. He lived and died and rose again bodily from the dead to give you even greater life than this human life – He offers you eternal life with Him. Will you embrace Him by faith today?

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made (a reflection on Psalm 139)

*Oh, Lord, you formed my inward parts within my mother’s womb
Made fearfully and wonderfully as with a weaver’s loom
Your works are simply marvelous and my soul knows it well
My bones were never hid from You for You know ev’ry cell*

*When I was in my mother’s womb Your eyes saw ev’ry part
My days were charted in Your book before the very start
How precious are Your thoughts to me, the sum of them is great
Far more than all the grains of sand; it’s more than I could state*

*But Lord my enemies abound: those are the bloody men
These wicked speak against You, Lord; they take Your name in vain
Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, my thoughts, my ways
And in the everlasting way, please lead me, Lord, I pray*

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ⁱ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 503.

ⁱⁱ See “Who’s Holding Your Breath?” accessed at <http://www.calvarybaptist.org/the-manifold-works-of-god>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Lauren Neergaard, “Wonder Womb” Pocono Record, August 14, 2016, accessed at <http://www.poconorecord.com/story/news/local/2016/08/14/wonder-womb/851107700>

^{iv} This can be accessed at <http://www.calvarybaptist.org/the-manifold-works-of-god>