

Rev. Seth D. Bode †† Sermon 430, 06-27-2021 †† Pentecost 5

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

PROVERBS 30

*⁴Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in the palms of his hands?
Who has wrapped the water in a garment?
Who has set up all the ends of the earth?
What is his name and the name of his son?
Tell me if you know!*

*⁵Every word of God has been refined.
He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.*



One of my favorite jokes in all of cinema is in Back to the Future: Part 2. Doc Brown and Marty speed ahead to the year 2015, and, just after predicting the end of a downpour of rain, the Doc says, “Too bad the post office isn’t as efficient as the weather service.” For all of the solutions science has for us, the weather is still entirely out of our hands. We can study it and describe it, but the meteorologists still get it very, very wrong. Our ‘good’ or ‘bad’ weather can depend upon the flap of a butterfly’s wing. And God has all of this cupped in His great hand. Last week, the weather predicted rain for our outdoor service, all the way up until Saturday. We had sun, then cloud cover and an occasional breeze, but ... no rain. Our humble yet confident prayers were more predictable.

So it is with a God who hears and answers prayers by grace. We have clear testimony from our Scripture lessons today that God gives us attention and care, not by works, but for the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus, God calms the wind and waves and stills the storm. He has complete control over the forces of nature. In Jesus, God the Father cares for us through the storms of life.

THIS IS OUR GOD AND WE KNOW HIS NAME

This chapter of Proverbs introduces a different writer than Solomon, whose name is Agur. Agur asks five questions. Each of the five questions in verse 4 implies this answer: God. Just listen: [*Pastor reads each of the questions in v. 4 and answers, "God."*]

In our humanistic age, people are sometimes overly impressed with human intellect and accomplishments. It is good, along with Agur, to recognize our smallness—both in knowledge and in power—compared with our Creator's omniscience and omnipotence. This helps put a proper perspective on life and shows us how completely dependent we are on God.

But some would ask: This is mythology, right? We are not supposed to believe that this section means anything other than picture language, because the Hebrews did not yet know that "god" was just a substitute for scientific facts. Here your "god" is like Poseidon or Neptune or Tiamat or a similar sea-god—just an imaginative description of the forces of nature at work.

But a beautiful thing about science and the natural world is that each discovery brings a great deal more questions. The earth rotates, wind currents follow weather patterns, and waves are just liquid reacting to gravitational pull; facts that are dependent on order, not chaos. They rest on discoverable laws of nature that seem put in place. There are obvious limits to our scientific answers, but at each limit is a Designer, a Builder, a Being who works out those questions behind the scenes. We could rightly say this true God pulls levers and flips switches behind the curtain. Our five senses cannot perceive that great Someone, greater than space, time, and matter, who keeps it all in order.

How does God keep this all in order? It is and always has been with His Word. *Every word of God has been refined* (v. 5a). The Hebrew word *tserufah* is used metaphorically to speak of a refining, smelting, or testing strong or valuable metals. Only authentic or trustworthy metals pass the test. And both are of great comfort. In God's Word, the Bible, we have a flawless guide through life and death. This verse 5 is almost a direct quote of Psalm 18:30, a psalm of David, and 2 Samuel 22:31. God's words are "refined," meaning "flawless" or "perfect."

Many people today, even in Christian churches, deny the flawless wording of the Bible. Yet the Bible asserts it in many places. Because it is flawless, we can always count on the Bible—all of God's Word, its promises and warnings, its

commands and assurances. This is the place to go with all of our needs and problems. In the Word of God, we are told, "*And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me*" (Psalm 50:15).

Some people challenge that, saying the Bible doesn't get to be God's Word just because it claims to be God's Word. But just ask yourself, what if God didn't put His name on His paper? So many teachers have torn out their hair because they do not know whose paper they are grading. The student didn't leave a name. But God tells us whose work this is. He does not leave us wondering. God tells us who His Son is.

"Whose kid is this?" He hits and pushes and doesn't fall in line. "Whose kid is this?" She shows up to preschool and promptly falls asleep in the teacher's arms. "Whose kid is this?" He never stops squealing. "Whose kid is this?" Now some of us parents have learned the line, "Whose kid is this?" to sort of distance ourselves from our own kids.... ("This your kid? This isn't my kid....") But God the Father does not hide the identity of His Son, nor does He try to distance Himself. In this flawless Word, God gives up the goods. His Son has a name you don't want to forget.

Guess who said this? "*No one has ever gone into heaven except the One who came down from heaven—the Son of Man*" (John 3:13). The Son of Man of course is also the Son of God. If you read the psalms, pay attention to an Old Testament reference to God's Son: "[*The LORD*] *said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'*" (Psalm 2:7). Of course, we have our Gospel, Mark chapter 4, when these followers of Jesus Christ see the command of their Master rebuke the wind and waves. They say in wonderment, "*Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?*" How blessed New Testament believers are, that we have the fuller revelation by which we know the name of God's Son! His name is Jesus Christ, our Savior. His Word is flawless.

And Jesus Christ is a *shield to all who take refuge in Him* (v. 5b). Don't you like that? "A Mighty Fortress is our God." The word for "shield" is the Hebrew *magen*, as in *magen haddavid*, what we often call the David's Star. In Hebrew it is called the David's shield. This word "shield" is a Word of grace. It expresses salvation by faith alone, since saving faith consists of a simple trust. Simple trust that God saves. When the boat is rocking, God still comes knocking.

God is still in control. He still cups the forces of nature into His mighty hands, and He still causes us to flourish and grow in patience and perseverance.

- In the worst troubles, you still know the name of Jesus.
- In the darkest of times, you still know the Lord of grace.
- In the valley of the shadow of death, you still recognize your Shepherd's guiding voice.
- In the guilt of sin, you still know your Lord Jesus Christ who took your sin away to the cross.

In swirling clouds and storming cyclones, let the sinner still react with simple trust.

- Let the hurting look to heaven and pray with confidence.
- Let the lonely live again in God's goodness.
- Let the one frightened by death be filled with excitement for heavenly peace.

For the sinner who knows God by faith in Jesus Christ lives unafraid now and will live forever.

So what happens when you combine a God of flawless words with power over nature—the power to go up and down in heaven, cup the wind in His hand, wrap up the water in His robe, and memorize the ends of the earth?

- ✓ He is the same God who came in the flesh of mankind.
- ✓ He is the same God who dressed up in our sin and died as our Substitute so that we could dress up in His righteousness.
- ✓ He is the same God who places baptismal waters in our hands.
- ✓ He is the same God who sends us into all the world to preach the good news to all creation.

His name is Jesus Christ. He gathered little Noah this morning into garments of righteousness as He cupped baptismal waters in His hands. But the real power was in His flawless Word of grace, naming Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the promises of baptism. (If only the weather service were as reliable as baptism promises.) This God has revealed His name to each and every believer here. He has named us His sons and daughters and empowered each and every one of us with His flawless Word, for **THIS IS OUR GOD AND WE KNOW HIS NAME, JESUS CHRIST.** Amen.