

# **"Oohing and Aahing"**

## **Psalm 29**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I'd like to begin by asking you a question that is quite instructive. How many times last week did something make you "ooh and aah" or gasp in wonder? I ask that question because wonder is a vital part of your life and mine and that's what I'm going to preach about today. Turn in your Bible to the passage I read earlier, Psalm 29, and you'll see what I mean.

### **WHAT WONDER IS**

Let's start by identifying what wonder is. The best way to do that is to observe small children. A sense of wonder pervades everything they do. They are enthralled by the world around them. They gasp a dozen times a day, overwhelmed by the sublime offerings of life. To them each day is filled with exquisite delights. Whether it's a caterpillar on a leaf or a star in the sky, children regard both with enchantment and joy.

Which helps us understand what wonder is. It's being in touch with reality but at the same time enchanted by it. The universe and life in it enthrall us. They regularly excite and overwhelm us. An old child's rhyme captures the gist of this. All of you know it by heart: *"Twinkle, twinkle, little star – How I wonder what you are; Up above the world so high – Like a diamond in the sky."* That is wonder.

### **THE LOSS OF WONDER**

Sadly though, almost all older children, teenagers and adults have lost it. One of the greatest gifts God gave us when our life began was the capacity for wonder. But that capacity, in most of us, is dead.

I asked you a question at the beginning of this sermon. How many times last week did something make you "ooh and aah" or gasp in wonder? If you're a typical adult, the answer is "none."

It's sad, even tragic, but true. Almost everyone loses or has lost the capacity for wonder that God gave them. That's the loss and it's

a serious one. It might not seem like it to most people but it is.

How many of you have ever had trouble getting your children to bed at night. Adults can't wait to hit the hay but it's almost impossible to get children to. It's amazing how thirsty they get or how small their bladders become at bedtime.

Did you ever think about that? Why don't children want to go to bed? It's because they're afraid that they might miss something. Their hearts are too excited and their lives too full to sleep. Their sense of wonder, you see, has filled their lives with meaning and joy. So much so that they don't want to miss a single minute of the day.

But not adults. We've lost our capacity for wonder and there is the inevitable slide into emptiness because we have. To lose our capacity for wonder is to lose meaning and joy. Writer H.L. Mencken said it well, *"The problem with life is not that it's a tragedy, but that it's a bore."* How right he was. Where wonder ends, so do meaning and joy. Where wonder ends, boredom begins.

## **LOOKING "AT" THINGS**

Now, there's a specific reason that people lose their capacity for wonder and it's this. It's because they look only *at* things. Psalm 29 helps us understand what that means.

This is a nature psalm and is about a thunderstorm. Verses 3-9 picture the sweep of a violent thunderstorm. They picture it moving from the Mediterranean Sea into and then down Israel, from Lebanon and Sirion, which is Mt. Herman, in the north to Kadesh in the south. Let's look *at* this thunderstorm as verses 3-9 present it to us.

Verses 3-4 mention thunder. Not long ago, thunder boomed so loudly that my whole house actually shook. That's what we have here.

Verse 5 describes the thunderstorm splintering the great cedar trees of Lebanon and verse 6 making Mt. Herman shake. Did you know that the total energy of a major thunderstorm far exceeds the total energy of an atomic bomb? It's that kind of energy and power that we see here.

Verse 7 discusses “flames of fire,” by which it means lightning. Just one bolt of lightning can generate 30 million volts of electricity. The temperature in the channel of just one bolt can reach 54,000 degrees F. Lightning is without doubt one of the most intimidating forces of nature.

Finally, verses 8-9 picture the thunderstorm shaking Kadesh in the south just as violently as it did Mt. Herman in the north. It shakes it so violently in fact that pregnant animals give premature birth because of it.

What I’ve just done is look *at* a thunderstorm. I’ve recognized and thought about the visible, material, and natural aspects of it.

Well, how I just viewed a thunderstorm is how most people view everything. They look only *at* things. They recognize and think about only the visible, material, and natural aspects of them.

There’s an adult version of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* that illustrates exactly what I mean. It goes like this: *“Twinkle, twinkle, little star – Now I know just what you are; An incandescent ball of gas – condensing to a solid mass.”* Notice the difference between the child’s version and the adult’s. It’s huge. To adults, stars are nothing more than a visible, material, and natural phenomenon, an incandescent ball of gas. That rhyme represents how most people view things. They look only *at* them.

## THE RESULT OF LOOKING “AT” THINGS

And that’s why they’ve lost their capacity for wonder. Author and rabbi Abraham Heschel writes about *“indifference to the sublime wonder of living.”* That line helps explain what looking only *at* things does. It trivializes the sublime. It reduces the extraordinary to the ordinary, the spectacular to the dull – which in turn takes all the “ooh’s and aah’s”, all of the gasps, out of our lives.

Examples abound. One of those is sex. Due in part to the influence of Alfred Kinsey, most people in our culture today look only *at* sex. They perceive and interpret it exclusively as a biological act that even animals can do. The result is so called “casual sex.” I think there’s a more

accurate term for it than that, "trivial sex." That's what looking only *at* sex does. It trivializes it and destroys wonder.

Also consider babies in the womb. Many people in our culture today look only *at* them. They perceive and interpret them exclusively as what is called "a product of conception." The result is abortion for the sake of convenience. It's surgeons, who took *The Hippocratic Oath*, performing partial birth abortions, delivering full term babies except for the head and then literally sucking their brains out. That's what looking only *at* babies in the womb does. It trivializes them and destroys wonder.

So that's why people have lost their capacity for wonder. That's why they rarely "ooh and aah." It's because they look only *at* things. They see only the visible, material, and natural aspects of them.

## **LOOKING "THROUGH" THINGS**

But there's another way of viewing the world around us. We look *through* things. That's exactly what David did with the thunderstorm in Psalm 29. He didn't just look *at* it. He looked *through* it as well.

Notice verses 1 and 2. They call us to worship God. The description of the thunderstorm, in verse 3-9, then follows. That clearly implies that there's a strong connection between God and thunderstorms. David explain that connection to us.

In verses 3-4, he tells us what thunder is. It's a whole lot more than just sound waves produced by bolts of lightning. It is also "the voice of the Lord." We talk about God's still small voice. It leads and guides. But His voice also thunders. It commands and reprovess.

Now look at verses 5 and 6. They have a companion passage, Isaiah 2:12-14. Those verses in Isaiah foresee the Second Coming of Jesus metaphorically - when cedar trees and mountains, and everything else that man finds impressive, will be laid low in judgment. The thunderstorm's power, in other words, is God's periodic reminder of that final judgment.

Finally, we come to verses 10-11. According to them, the same

power of God that's in the thunderstorm is right now both an instrument of judgment, verse 10, and of salvation, verse 11.

Do you get what David did in these verses? He looked *through* the thunderstorm. There's something transcendent about thunderstorms - and everything else - and he saw it.

So should we. We should view the world just as he did. We should look *through* things. That means that we should recognize and think about the invisible, spiritual, and supernatural aspects of them.

Take sex, for instance. I don't see it as just a biological act. I see it as something far more - a reflex of and a testimony to the Trinity. Sex isn't primarily about reproduction or pleasure. It's primarily about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the relationship between them.

Or take babies in the womb. I don't see them as just products of conception. I see them as something far more - products of God. He Himself shapes and forms them every step of the way in the womb.

You can see that there's something transcendent about sex and babies in the womb. I recognize and think about that. I look *through* things in other words and that's our call.

To do that of course we have to study. We have to study Scripture and the things themselves. Study informs our mind and enables us to "recognize" the invisible, spiritual, and supernatural realities around us. Going back to sex, I know what is transcendent about it because I studied Scripture, Genesis 2:21-25 and Song of Songs 8:6. Going back to babies in the womb, I know what is transcendent about them because I studied Scripture, Psalm 139. Notice that I wouldn't be able to look *through* these things if I hadn't studied.

Anyway, that is the vital lesson that Psalm 29 teaches us. We need to look *through* things.

## **THE RESULT OF LOOKING "THROUGH" THINGS**

The last line in verse 9 shows what happens when we do. It's what David did with the thunderstorm. We cry out with enchantment and awe,

*"Glory!"* We "ooh and aah" as we're overwhelmed by the sublime offerings of life. We recapture the wonder we've lost and the meaning and joy that go along with it.

I know that is true because I constantly experience it. I sometimes go overboard in fact and annoy my wife in the process.

Last week, for instance, I learned something from reading a Richard Halverson book. The electrons of a hydrogen atom spin around their nucleus six thousand million million times per second. Imagine that! All atoms are that way, which is why things seem solid. I say "seem" because they actually aren't. You and I, for example, are mainly space. We only appear to be solid because the electrons in the atoms that make us up are spinning so fast. As Halverson points out, if the whole human race were compressed into a solid mass, it would fit into a thimble.

I don't care what any atheist physicists says, there's something transcendent about that. I know so because of a verse I thought of the moment I read what Halverson wrote. It's Colossians 1:17, *"And in Jesus all things hold together."* Jesus is holding the atoms together that hold us together and that makes me want to cry out *"Glory!"* I've been oohing and aahing ever since I learned what Halverson wrote. Just ask my wife. She's tired of hearing me talk about it.

But it isn't just atoms, sex, or babies in the womb. It's people, rain, sound, taste, colors, eggs becoming chicks, seeds becoming corn on the cob, waking up in the morning, and so on. Looking *through* those things, recognizing and thinking about what is transcendent about them, fills us with wonder and awe.

## **CONCLUSION**

I opened with a question and I'll close with one. How many times this week will something make you "ooh and aah?" The answer is "many times" if you do what David did here in Psalm 29. Become a disciple of Jesus. Then start looking *through* things. You'll "ooh and aah" your way through life if you do.