

# ACTIVE SAVIOR

PSALM 77:11-15 MAY 9, 2018

Let's find our way to Psalm 77, verse 11 together. Tonight we have a long string of joyful words, sung out of the heart of a man restored to the joy of his salvation.

One of my favorite things to hear when I'm watching or listening to an interview is when the subject is asked something and then gives this response: "I think the work speaks for itself." I love it because they then *always* go on to speak about whatever they just said they really don't *need* to speak about. They talk about details you might have missed and their motivation and give a defense of why they think their work is profound and important. You never see an interviewer ask someone a question and see that person say, "I think the work speaks for itself," and then just go silent or leave the room. The whole *point* of the interview is that the speaker and the listener *want* to discuss something and dissect it and have it explained.

Now, the work of God is so outstanding and so tremendous that, in one sense, it speaks for itself. The heavens declare the handiwork of God. I'm reminded of when the religious leaders were questioned a man Jesus had healed, asking all these different politicized questions, and he finally said, "Look, I once was blind, now I see." The work spoke for itself.

But when someone's work is so dramatic and so effective, we *want* to talk about it. We want to spread the word. That was certainly true of Asaph, who underwent a radical transformation of heart and mind between verses 9 and 11. What he received from God was just as self-evident as the blind man there in the Gospels. At this point, Asaph could have said, "I once was suicidal, now I'm in celebration." But news this good needs to be talked about and Asaph has a *lot* to say.

In our verses he'll reference God's works and wonders repeatedly, His deeds, His way, His arm, and His strength. And, having thought about the activity of God he makes this assessment in verse 13: "Who is so great a God as our God?"

Is your God great? One of the things that struck me about the Gospel For Asia presentation a number of weeks back was how cruel and merciless the gods of the Hindu system are. The only thing "great" about them was how great are the burdens that people have to carry in order to try to appease these angry false deities. Pick a religion of the world, throughout history and try to find a god who is worthy to be called 'great' like the one true God is. The gods of human religions are not great or greatly to be praised. Most often they are monsters to be *avoided*. These religions are constructed to try to *appease* their anger or their intemperance. But our God is *great* in a way that nothing can compare to. In His work, His wonders, His ways, nothing else even registers on the graph next to Him. So let's think about those works as Asaph talks about them, starting in verse 11.

**Psalm 77:11 - <sup>11</sup>I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.**

Think for a moment about what God has done for humanity from the beginning of time. In Biblical history. In ancient and modern *world* history. In our nation's history. In the life of this Church. In your own life. The God of the Bible is not some existential power, but an active *Person* who makes it His business to involve Himself in the lives and stories not just of *one* culture or *one* generation, but in *each* life from Adam on down in an unbroken succession from life to life, including yours. Every era. Every culture. Every place around the world. Every generation. Every life has its source in God and

has been the object of God's love. Now, sadly, many ignore that love and reject it. They leave God's precious gifts unopened. But the wonderful works of the Lord are faithful for each person, from the knitting of their body together in their mother's womb to the faithful offer of salvation, to the striving with mankind that they might be saved and transformed by His power.

Psalms 66 says it plainly:

**Psalms 66:5 - *"Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men."***

The Bible reveals that not *only* does God work tirelessly in our lives, He will, if need be, supernaturally bypass the laws of nature in order to accomplish His work. We serve a miracle-working God! He has accomplished these great wonders not just once or twice, but throughout the generations and He still has more in store as we walk with Him and as He finishes what He started.

**Psalms 77:12 - *"I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds."***

Here, in response to remembering the wonderful works of God, Asaph points out 2 activities of his own. He says he will *meditate* and he will *talk about* God's deeds.

First the meditation. When Asaph says he 'remembers' he doesn't just mean makes a list and then that's it. He thinks through the work of God. The testimony of Scripture. The history of God's dealings with man in general and in his own life personally. In the Bible, 'meditation' isn't the emptying of the mind like we think of in the mystical, new-age sense. It means to *fill* your mind with thoughts, thinking intently and at length about the Lord and about His word.

And then Asaph says, "Not only am I *thinking* about these things, I'm *talking* about them too." He's preaching these truths about God enthusiastically and with thanksgiving. He took up the call all of us have been given: To spread the word about who God is and what He has done.

Imagine for a moment one of your unfinished projects around the house. That bathroom that needs to be redone or that light fixture you want swapped out. What if tomorrow someone came to your door and said, "Sir/Ma'am, I'm a craftsman. I heard you need your bathroom remodel finished." If we had a more trusting society, you'd say, "That's true." Well, imagine then that the craftsman said, "I'd love to come in and take a look." You let him in, and he says, "Do you mind if I fix a couple things here? It'll be no charge." It seems too good to be true, but you say, "Go ahead." A short time later you come back to the bathroom and you see it's completely finished. Not only is it finished, but he gave you all the upgrades you would've gotten had they not been so expensive. The work is done perfectly. He even cleaned up after himself. As he's walking out, he hands you his card and says, "There's no charge. Here's my card."

Now, if someone did that, wouldn't you spread the word? That's a story worth telling because it's so *unusual*. How could anyone believe someone would be so generous? It's almost unbelievable. But you would say, "Come see my bathroom for yourself!" Of course we would spread the word.

Now, in that analogy, Jesus is not the craftsman. The story is just meant to illustrate that if someone did such great and lavish work for you, you'd be hard-pressed not to spread the word. The same was true for Asaph when he thought through the wonderful works of God. And, I would say, if we

don't have anything to talk about concerning God, then perhaps we're not being thoughtful enough about what He's done.

Asaph's thoughtful meditation about the work of the Lord not only led him to spread the word with enthusiasm and thanksgiving, it also brought him some profound realizations.

**Psalm 77:13 - <sup>13</sup>Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God?**

Thinking about *what* God has done led Asaph to realize things about *who* God is and *how* He acts. Asaph writes, "Your way...is in the sanctuary." Or perhaps your version says, "Your ways are holy." We could say it this way: "God, Your road is sacred and set apart. The way You do things is special and consecrated." And it's true. God is holy, His ways are holy, His path is holy and so He calls us to be *holy*. For us to go the way of *the sanctuary*. What was the sanctuary during Asaph's time? Well, it was a place dedicated to the service of God. The place where the Presence of God was residing.

This describes who we are today if we are in Christ Jesus.

**1 Corinthians 3:17b - For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.**

**Ephesians 2:19-22 - <sup>19</sup>Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...<sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

Today, rather than some tent or stone building, God's sanctuary is the hearts of His people. We are the dwelling place of God, set apart for the service of God and the place where His Spirit inhabits. The way of God, for us, is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, walking in holiness, being built up individually and corporately that the movements and progress of our lives might proclaim God's greatness and majesty.

**Psalm 77:14 - <sup>14</sup>You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.**

In verse 11 Asaph references the "wonders of old" but here reminds us that God *still* does wonders. He hasn't stopped. And His work is not hidden away or encoded so that only a select few can notice them. They are conspicuous and observable among the nations. We can see Him intervening. Transforming lives. Accomplishing prophecy. As Christians, we're meant to continually have testimonies of how God is working. That doesn't mean it's always going to be incredible or miraculous. But God is busy doing work in us, through us and around us, at least that's the plan. And so we should be regularly able to share what that work is, even if we don't understand the why of it or how it's going to resolve.

It says, "You have declared Your strength among the peoples." It begs the question: How does God declare His strength today? Well, He can and does still work what we would call wonders. He's still the God of miracles. But in this dispensation of grace, in this Church age, we've been told that God declares His strength through our *weakness*.

Jesus told Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:

**2 Corinthians 12:9 - “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made *perfect* in weakness.”**

Paul said:

**1 Corinthians 1:27 - <sup>27</sup> But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;**

Now, weakness is not something we generally order up for ourselves. But it *is* part of the program. And, as an encouragement, look at Asaph. We find him here in some of the weakest days of his life but through the wonderful work of God he’s able to exhibit incredible, lasting, spiritual strength. These weak days produced a song that has lasted 3 thousand years, ministering to an uncountable number of people.

God declares His strength in many ways and one of His preferred methods is through our weakness. Because when we are weak, then we are strong.

**Psalm 77:15 - <sup>15</sup>You have with *Your* arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph.**

God Himself came to the rescue. He paid the ransom price by giving His own Son that you and I might be saved from the penalty we rightly deserved. The Lord did not send a surrogate, but with His own arm snatched us from death. And we are reminded that God’s deeds toward men are *redemptive*. They’re not vindictive. They’re motivated by tender mercy and compassionate. And there, as the verse closes, Asaph gives brings up a couple of examples of those who have experienced God’s redemption. First: Jacob and Joseph. God’s love is for the slave and the scoundrel. The grifter and the prisoner. The Lord loves them the same and saves them the same. Though, compared to Jacob, Joseph was innocent, he was just as much in need of salvation as his father, the one who lied and supplanted and wrestled with God.

But Asaph also calls our attention to another example: The “sons” of these men. Which reminds us that God’s redemptive work kept going and is *still* going strong. He, by His own arm, with His own hands, is accomplishing the rescue work, saving men and women and children all over the globe because of His grace. And now Asaph has come full circle. Before he had been so convinced God had given up on man, that His promise had failed, but here he speaks the *truth* that God’s dedication toward mankind continues and will continue unabated until the work is done.

As we close, we remember the underlying theme of our study in these Psalms. These songs weren’t just for the author. They were also sent to Jeduthun, specifically. Through him they are also addressed to us. These can become *our* songs. And, this stanza in particular can become ours in a very real way. Asaph’s words remind us of what happened on the day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church:

**Acts 2:7-11 - <sup>7</sup> Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya**

**adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”**

The same Spirit that was giving strength to Asaph to bring forth incredible spiritual fruit in a time of weakness now empowers us to do the same. To understand and speak forth the wonderful works of God, as living testimonies walking in holiness, enjoying the greatness of the Lord.