

The Joy of Fearing God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2023

Preacher: Roger Cryan

[0 : 00] Romans 11.33 says, Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways.

Our fear of God, we've been learning, is connected to our knowledge and our understanding of who God is. And today we look at the wisdom of God.

In our verse right there in Romans 11.33, Paul writes that there's a great depth to the riches, wisdom, and knowledge of God.

So God's wisdom, it's vast. It's incomprehensible to us. And he uses that term depths in relation to trying to understand the depths of the ocean.

And his wisdom goes beyond that. It's out of his vast, incomprehensible depth of wisdom that God has directed and really continues to direct all things to the best end.

[1 : 07] And that end being His glory. And the praise of the glory of His grace. So, when we think of that verse, I don't think we're going to cover this topic in one Sunday.

Or even two Sundays. Or even a hundred Sundays. Because we're dealing with the depth of the wisdom of God. Incomprehensible to us.

But, we can explore some of the shallows that we have, that He's provided for us in the revelation that we have from Him.

There's ways that He's revealed His wisdom. And we want to do that this morning again. Hoping and trusting that we will be amazed at the wisdom of God and grow in this reverential awe of God. And really, truly, the joy that comes in fearing God. So let's begin by seeing the wisdom of God and what He's created.

[2 : 11] Because it's written in Psalm 19 that creation declares that which is glorious about God. So certainly, we should see something of the wisdom of God in the works of God.

In His creation. Psalm 104, verse 24 states that all His manifold works were done in wisdom. We're going to be taking a look at some of those works this morning.

Works in creation. Works in providence. Works in this great and grand plan of salvation. You're already thinking, no way you could cover that in one 45-minute time.

And you're right. So you'll go on exploring yourselves throughout the week as you reach into God's Word. But let's start with this whole matter of God's wisdom in creation.

So many different aspects of creation that we could see the wisdom of God. We'll start with just the earth itself and where He's positioned the earth in space.

[3 : 16] I trust you see a picture up there on the globe, the earth hanging in space. Jeffrey Williams wrote a book titled *The Work of His Hands, The View of God's Creation from Space*.

It's a book of photographs taken from space. He became an astronaut in 1996 and flew on a mission, a 10-day mission, in the space shuttle and also spent a period of six months in the space station.

So he's speaking from experience. And he wrote in his book, *When one views the earth from orbit through the window of a spacecraft for the first time and perhaps most every time, it's normal to be struck by the obvious reality that the earth is a ball in the vastness of space.*

It's one thing to know that academically, quite another to view it. God really does suspend the earth on nothing. Amen. It's there?

Oh, there it is. Okay. I wanted to see what it looked like up there. Okay. Certainly nothing, it's hanging on nothing except for the Word of God's power, that which is invisible to us.

[4 : 43] Hebrews 1.3, written about Jesus, says he's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the Word of his power.

In Colossians 2.3, Paul wrote that in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Now, all the wise decisions and actions that we make are based on the knowledge that we've received from someone else, a source outside of ourselves.

And at times, our knowledge certainly is limited or it's faulty knowledge. And while we hope to make wise decisions, it's not always the case because we do lack perfect knowledge and complete knowledge and the insights really necessary to make perfectly wise decisions and plans.

Not so with Jesus Christ. Not so with God. We can expect to see the grand display of the wisdom and knowledge of God and all he created because in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He had all the knowledge and wisdom necessary to create the universe to be just right. And that's how we see and what we see and how God positioned, in this case, earth in just the right spot.

[6 : 10] The Word of his power and wisdom positioned earth just in the right spot in the universe, specifically in the Milky Way galaxy, which is just one of billions of galaxies.

I wanted to see that one too. The Hubble Space Telescope was launched in April of 1990 and it's discovered about 100 billion galaxies in the universe.

And then recently, just last December in 2021, the James Webb Telescope was launched and now the estimated number of galaxies is now about 200 billion and they expect that number just to keep growing and climbing.

And what you see is a rendering of what researchers think the Milky Way galaxy looks like. It's estimated that the Milky Way galaxy is 100,000 to 120,000 light years in diameter and 1,000 light years thick.

One light year is about 5.9 trillion miles. You figured out the distance. I didn't bother trying to figure that out. Earth, as you look at that, is about 25,000 light years from the center and about 25,000 light years from the outer edge.

[7 : 36] So we're about halfway between the center and the outer edge of the Milky Way. Now, back in 1977, Voyager 1 was launched, a space probe was launched from Earth and traveled from Earth and as of this past August 2022, it's about 14.6 billion miles away from Earth.

And that's only because it travels a measly 35,000 miles per hour. So you're getting the idea of the vastness of this universe, just our own galaxy in which we live.

The sun also located about 25,000 light years from the center of the galaxy and about 93 million miles from us, Earth.

And that's where the all-wise God positioned and continues to hold the Earth in place. Too far from the sun and yet we end up being too cold for life.

If you like snow, then go to, which one of it, Jupiter, as an average temperature of minus 235 degrees Fahrenheit. Or if you want to be a snowbird and go to someplace warmer, if we were positioned too close to the sun, we'd be like Venus with a boundly 354 degrees Fahrenheit.

[9 : 11] So God has positioned us just where we need to be, but not only in regard to temperature. But the precision of our location is also important because of the large number of asteroids and meteoroids that are traveling about in space.

Because Jupiter is in the place that it is with the gravity that it has. It keeps a lot of the large rocks from hitting the Earth. And also the moon has an important location in regard to that.

And you can see the testimony of that as you go out on a nice clear night and see all the craters of the moon and see how that has also provided us some protection from the danger and damage that could happen if a meteoroid hit us.

And that same moon helps stabilize the Earth as it prevents our Earth from tilting too far one direction or another direction. Well, again, you can thank God that in His wisdom He positioned the Earth, the sun, the moon, the planets in just the right locations.

But let's move beyond location and look to what that outer atmosphere that God has provided for us so that we can have life on our Earth.

[10 : 31] One of the main reasons we're able to have life on Earth is because of the atmosphere that God has provided in His wisdom. I want to look again. And of course, that atmosphere, you can remember in your science books and the different levels of the atmosphere, but those gases in the atmosphere include 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, 1% carbon dioxide and other gases as well.

All those gases just in the right proportions that we need, again, for us to take a nice deep breath and be able to breathe and live in this world.

But that atmosphere also provides protection from the sun's most harmful rays as they reflect or absorb the strongest rays of the sunlight.

But that atmosphere also provides us and makes it possible for us to hear sounds because sound waves can't travel through empty space. They need gases through which to travel.

And because of that, hopefully you would think it's good that you can hear me this morning. Or you can hear your family members, you can hear the birds sing, you can hear the waves crash against the shore.

[11 : 54] All that because we have just the right atmosphere. But also, if we didn't have an atmosphere, there would be no clouds or rain.

In fact, there would be no weather at all. Most weather occurs because the atmosphere heats up more in some places rather than other places. So the next time you take a nice deep breath or you hear a pleasing sound or take a drink of water, feel a nice breeze, remember, all done out of the grand wisdom of God and the work that He has done and provided for us.

And I would hope because it happened to me this morning as I went outside, I was just taking a walk around the yard and saw the moon up there. The Spirit of God brought it back to my mind, all that God has done to make it possible for me to stand there, take a deep breath and look up there at the moon.

And it turned out to be a time of worship. And that's what I'm hoping and praying that this information does as you move through your day and have these many opportunities and times of worship and stand in reverential awe and have an experience of joy in fearing God knowing what He has done.

Well, we have to keep going. There's so many other ways in which we see that in creation as I was doing that study about what He got, we got to move on and move it to something a little closer to home like your heart.

[13 : 34] You feel your pulse? I always have a hard time finding my pulse in my wrist. It's there. I have a hard time finding it, but it's working. That organ about the size of your fist weighs about 10.5 ounces, pumps a capacity of 2,000 gallons of blood per day.

To do that, its valves operate 4,000, 5,000 times per hour. It's like two pumps in one that's going on there. The right side of your heart receives the blood.

And pumps it to the lungs so that it can be re-oxygenated and pumped back out through your body. And we get all that oxygen that we need throughout our whole body and the cells within our body and all that's done in about 60 seconds.

Time. Next time you feel your pulse, understand all that's going on and what God has done. Psalm 104, 24, after David reflected on them the many and varied ways God worked in his creation.

He wrote, O Lord, how manifold are your works in wisdom. Have you made them all? The earth is full of your creatures. So day after day, creation is sending out this message that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[15 : 00] are you listening? Are you responding in that humble adoration of God as you move through your day?

Don't miss those opportunities. Those are grand opportunities that we in particular as God's children can have. An unsafe person that denies all this, you see the joy they're missing out on in knowing God and having that reverential joy of God.

Well, let's move on from that revelation of the wisdom of God in creation and begin seeing some of it in the wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in his providence.

A number of weeks ago, I can't remember how long ago, Pastor John had a series on providence. So if you want to move beyond what I present here, go back and revisit the lessons he had.

But the definition he provided for us was God upholds in regard to providence. It's the way God upholds, controls all his creatures, all their actions, all the time.

[16 : 08] Another couple other definitions. John Piper wrote quite an extensive book, about 700 pages, on the providence of God. And he writes in his book, God's sovereignty is his right and power to do all that he decides to do.

Providence is sovereignty in the service of wise purposes. It's God's seeing to everything. You know, we use that phrase at times, see that it gets done.

Well, this is providence of God. He's seeing that his grand purposes are getting done. And he's doing that as sovereign God, Lord over all.

Absolutely everything that needs to be done to bring about his purposes, God sees to it that it happens. Isaiah 46:10, I declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times, things not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purposes.

And that's what God has been doing throughout the ages. all his purposes. He's working in specific ways to accomplish those purposes. Calvin wrote in his Institutes of the Christian Religion that he, God, directs everything by his incomprehensible wisdom and disposes it to his own end.

[17 : 33] Of course, the book that we've been working through, Jerry Bridges, provides his own definition of providence in his book and he writes that providence is his constant care for and his absolute rule over all his creation, directing all things to their appointed end for his own glory.

So the sovereign God is working in all the details of life, directing all those details so as to accomplish his purposes which ultimately lead to his glory.

He's doing this out of his great power and wisdom. Now it's one thing to have great power, but to be able to connect that with incomparable wisdom, he's able to accomplish the intended purpose in the best possible way to again accomplish the ultimate purpose.

So how can we see the providence of God displayed? Well, again, we can give thanks that he's provided his word, the ways in which he's worked through history, through time, so that we could see some of those examples of how he's working in all things to accomplish his purposes.

We've already spent some time with creation, so I'll move through this quickly, Psalm 104, 10 through 38. The psalmist writes, you make springs gush forth in the valleys, they flow between the hills, they give drink to every beast of the field.

[19 : 15] You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants, for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth. So these things aren't just happening by chance.

A while ago, we did a study on worldview. One was worldview of science. You know, we give names to these different laws that we see taking place in the world that allow life to continue on. Well, again, these are laws, names that we give to these laws, which is very helpful in helping us understand what's going on. But those names just represent and name secondary causes that God is working through to sustain life for us in this world.

Again, to accomplish his purposes. God works through all of these secondary causes to care for and to rule over his creation.

So let's move on. We can also see his providence in human history, specifically in his working in human activities to accomplish his purposes.

[20 : 23] One example, delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage. Read that story with that insight and understanding of the providence of God.

Exodus chapter 1 through 14, when God's people, Israel, were slaves in Egypt, they needed someone who would deliver them out of bondage. Remember, God had made great promises about this nation and how they would continue on and on and on.

And here they are in bondage in the land of Egypt, certainly not experiencing what God had promised, but God is well able to accomplish that which he promised. And in this case, they needed a deliverer, someone that would deliver them out of this land of bondage.

How would that be accomplished? Who would that be? How could such a man even come forth? Pharaoh had commanded that all the male babies born to the Hebrews were to be killed, thrown into the Nile River.

All hope gone now. Humanly speaking, but there was one woman that gave birth to a son and hid him for three months and then put him into a waterproof basket in the Nile River among the reeds and left him there.

[21 : 39] That sounds like a good plan, right? In order to have a deliverer? Well, who would just happen to come along but Pharaoh's daughter who just happened to see the basket?

One of her servants retrieved it, opened it, and she saw the baby boy. She knew it was one of the Hebrews' children and she was well aware of what was to be done to the Hebrew baby boy. But she just happened to look with favor upon that baby boy and saved his life. And who happened to be nearby?

But, wow, wouldn't you love to have a great sister like this? There was a sister hiding nearby to see what would happen to that baby boy, her brother, that was in that basket. And as soon as she saw the princess there with the baby boy, she ran to the princess and asked, you want me to get a Hebrew woman to nurse this baby for you?

Man, I don't know how old she was, but she was thinking on the providence of God. She ran and got her mother, the baby boy's mother, and the princess says, yeah, you take care of him for that period of time.

[22 : 51] In fact, I'll pay you to do it. Wow! Icing on the cake for that mother. Additional time. And she cared for that baby until it was time to give her to the princess.

And that princess took the baby boy into her home and named that baby boy what? Moses. And brought him up in where?

Pharaoh's household. So interesting and ironic how God works in this providence of time. Here, this man estimating that he will keep this nation from prospering.

What kind of problem with God? Before him all the nations are as nothing, right? Regarded by him as worth even less than nothing.

The decrees of man do not prohibit God from accomplishing his purposes. We're talking about God who has a grand plan in place and in his wisdom has designed the way in which it would happen.

[23 : 59] Nothing can stand in his way. And so Moses is the one that would be used to deliver God's people. Well, there's another opportunity as well.

Preserving his people in time of great famine. You can read of this one in Genesis 37 through 50. In those chapters you see all the events that God wisely brought to pass and worked through to get Joseph to be the highest official in Egypt.

Responsible for collecting and then distributing the grain in the time of famine. God even worked through in the lives of his brothers who hated Joseph and were jealous of him.

They sold him to a Midianite trader who eventually sold him to Potiphar who just happened to be the captain of the guard in the kingdom of the great Egyptian pharaoh.

Not fate. All the time Joseph was among the Egyptians whether in office or in prison. It's recorded that the Lord was with Joseph and he became a successful man.

[25 : 06] At the end of all the events we learn of Joseph's perspective of all that wisdom that wise providence of God. He understood. He saw what was taking place.

And you can read of that in a couple different places. Genesis 45. I don't have these verses for you on the screen but I'll quickly read through those. After his brothers realized that who he was Joseph revealed himself oh no we're in for it now.

Joseph says and now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here.

You sold me here. For God sent me before you to preserve life for the famine has been in the land these two years and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest and God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth to keep alive for you many survivors.

So it was not you who sent me here but God. In Genesis 50 similar things. I guess they still weren't convinced because after Jacob died thinking oh no now he's really going to take revenge on us.

Joseph again said to them do not fear for am I in the place of God? As for you you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today so God in his wise providence was well able to provide for and preserve his people.

[26 : 48] It doesn't matter if there's great famine in the land doesn't keep God from working and accomplishing his purposes he knows how to work and accomplish his purposes.

But let's move on. His all wise providence is also seen in sending the ultimate promise deliverer Jesus. God had revealed his all wise providence of the coming of this deliverer even to Adam and Eve when he spoke to the serpent.

In Genesis 3.15 I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Then throughout all the intervening approximately 4,000 years God wisely directed and worked out his all wise providence until at just the right time the Virgin Mary would travel to Bethlehem with Joseph and give birth to her son.

Just the right time just the right place the place there that had been prophesied 700 years prior to that where it would happen. All these promises sometimes we make promises and we're really careful thinking am I really going to be able to keep what I've said and promised.

[28 : 18] No problem with the all wise sovereign God. He's well able to accomplish that which he's promised. Time is not a hindrance to him. Time is not an obstacle.

Human beings are not an obstacle for him to accomplish his grand plan in this case of redemption. Matthew 1.21 indicates and says for he will save his people from their sins the promised deliverer. God incarnate entered the world. And so again we stand in awe of God who is working and bringing about the accomplishment of his all wise purpose.

So let's take a look at the display of wisdom of God in the redemption of sinners. Here we see the wisdom of God overcoming what seems to be insurmountable obstacles.

You know we've been there before. We find ourselves in certain dilemma. You know certain sets of circumstances that come together that seem insurmountable to us and sometimes we'll say I'm in a dilemma here.

[29 : 33] I don't know what to do or even if I can do anything about this. well humanly speaking there would seem to have been some insurmountable obstacles that would prevent human beings from being saved from their sin and being able to dwell with the most high God throughout all eternity.

I mean one of those problems was that among men there was no person without sin that could offer himself as a suitable substitutional sacrifice for sinners.

Romans 3 23 for all had sinned and fall short of the glory of God insurmountable obstacle without hope in this set of circumstances that we were in.

The second was how would the holy just God rescue sinners out of their bondage to sin without becoming unjust in his forgiveness of their sins.

Can that actually be done? Well for us we wouldn't be able to figure a way out to do that in those two obstacles themselves.

[30 : 52] It's not a problem with the all-wise God. Second Corinthians 5 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin.

So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. How was this done? God's wise plan was that the sovereign Lord, the son of God, would become the sacrificial lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world.

Wow! So amazing! I mean it caught everybody then off guard, his own followers. I mean it started with the birth of this one.

They didn't expect that. And now that their redeemer would come in this way? Totally off guard. But Jesus came willingly.

Philippians 2 6 Who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.

[31 : 58] He lived a perfectly holy life. This is all the outworkings of God in overcoming what we would have seen as insurmountable obstacles. But Jesus lived that perfect life as a man.

He committed no sin neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled he did not revile in return. When he suffered he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

And now we have as it says in Hebrews 4 a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. But one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin.

In 1 John 3 5 you know that he appeared in order to take away sin. And in him there is no sin. So Jesus was that perfect sacrificial lamb of God.

And he as the God man gave himself as the sacrifice to bear the wrath of God on behalf of sinners. 700 plus years before Jesus died on the cross Isaiah wrote of his sacrificial death Isaiah 53 5 but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.

[33 : 23] So 700 years prior prophesied no problem for God to accomplish that which he promised in all his grand infinite wisdom and power and many other attributes compassion and love of God well able to accomplish that which he has planned.

Well God the father showed the acceptance of his son's sacrifice by raising him from the dead and seated him at the right hand of God in Peter's message to the religious leaders he declared the God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree God exalted him at the right hand as leader and savior Galatians 1 1 God the father who raised him from the dead Hebrews 12 2 looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God that aspect of God's grand plan of redemption accomplished so now that in another obstacle we would

think how was such a great grand redemption to be applied to sinners who were still estranged from God separated from God dead in trespasses and sins how is that going to come play it's a great plan wonderful plan but how could these sinners become recipients of that now dead in trespasses and sins they couldn't lift themselves up by their own bootstraps to accomplish that they didn't even desire to do it in and of themselves well we heard messages from pastor john again recently from romans chapter eight so i just go through these steps quickly what what did you call the chain the golden chain of redemption and we see that what god in all his wisdom did work in such a way before creation chosen chosen predestined individuals to be conformed to the image of jesus christ those same individuals were called by god through the gospel by the power of the holy spirit first corinthians 1 18 thought was a good verse here for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it's the power of god it pleased god through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe the wisdom of god seen in the presentation of the gospel to those who were dead in trespasses and sin and those who did believe by faith in jesus christ and what god had done through him his death burial and resurrection confessing jesus christ as lord turning from their sin those individuals now are declared righteous how could a sinner be acceptable to god justified by faith through jesus christ god provided that way and then continued to work in sanctifying them that which god declares to be positionally true of an individual by his holy spirit he begins to transform them practically into the likeness of jesus christ until that time those individuals are glorified and that good work that god began in them comes to completion when they are glorified in the presence of jesus christ the grand plan of god the wisdom of god on display in his creation and his providence in this grand plan of redemption may god certainly be glorified in our response let's take joy in having this reverential awe of god and what he has done and what he'll continue to do out of the depth of infinite incomprehensible wisdom let's pray father certainly 45 minutes not worthy to go into the great depth of your wisdom thank you for revealing something of yourself to us that we desperately needed to see in order to really be humble before you and worship certainly you as the creator but the god of salvation how we pray that we continue to walk in that humility this week and that your spirit would bring back to our mind that which is true of yourself so that as we move through our daily lives all these these glories of yourself are not missed on us so that we can maybe just briefly offer to you a prayer of thanksgiving and worship for who you are move us in that direction we ask in Jesus name amen thank you Lord clear let me