

Welcome to our worship for this morning, as Neil continues with the Book of Proverbs.

Opening Hymn CH4 5 O Lord Our God Throughout the earth

- 1 O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth
how glorious is your name,
and glorious too where unseen heavens
your majesty proclaim.
On infant lips, in children's song
a strong defence you raise
to counter enemy and threat,
and foil the rebel's ways.
- 2 When I look up and see the stars
which your own fingers made,
and wonder at the moon and stars,
each perfectly displayed ;
then I must ask, 'Why do you care ?
Why love humanity ?
And why keep every mortal name
fixed in your memory ?'
- 3 Yet such as us you made and meant
just less than gods to be ;
with honour and with glory, Lord,
you crowned humanity.
And then dominion you bestowed
for all made by your hand,
all sheep and cattle, birds and fish
that move through sea or land.

Coda:
O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth
how glorious is your name !

Psalm 8
John L. Bell (b.1949)

Opening Prayer

Almighty God
Hovering Spirit
Wise wise Jesus

Who planted these mountains into the earth

Who etched the course of the rivers
And marked the boundaries of the seas.

Who sees deep, deep inside the rock of the mountains
Who sees the highest tip of the cloud above
All is seen in you
All is held in you
And we praise you.

You call us onto the slopes of the mountain, and the command is live, be fruitful, be wise
You call us to the banks of the river, and the command is live, be fruitful, be wise
You call us under the rain of the cloud, and the command is live, be fruitful, be wise

Come and forgive us
Where our wisdom has been folly
And our work has been neglected
And our calling twisted
And we have not been of you
And we have caused harm
And we have left behind us destruction
Forgive us,
Forgive us,
In Jesus remake us

And now remake us
To live wisely,
In the name of Jesus Christ,

AMEN

Sermon

Schiehallion and Hochmah

This morning, we are filming from a mountain, one of the most famous mountains in Scotland
Schiehallion
Which means hill of the Caledonians.

I want us to think of three scenes which happened here in the 1770s

And then I want to think of what the scriptures say in Proverbs chapter 8 verses 22-36,
where a voice speaks about being with God at the beginning of the world, and what I would like to do today,
With the help of this mountain

Is explore the identity of this voice.

But first, let us listen to Proverbs chapter 8, verse 22-36

The Lord created me at the beginning^[a] of his work,^[b]
the first of his acts of long ago.

²³ Ages ago I was set up,

at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴ When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵ Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—

²⁶ when he had not yet made earth and fields,^[c]
or the world's first bits of soil.

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸ when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,

when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;^[d]

and I was daily his^[e] delight,

rejoicing before him always,

³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.

³² 'And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.

³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.

³⁴ Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.

³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favour from the Lord;

³⁶ but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death.'

I want us to notice some things about this voice.

This voice speaks of being with God before the beginning of everything else

This voice speaks of being present with God when all the world is birthed – the words for bringing the earth forth, are forceful, primal words – words for birthing, words for planting,

The voice speaks of delight of being with God,

The voice speaks of helping God, the word used is “master worker”

And then the voice says “Listen to me”

And later on, I would like to give that voice a name,
I want to give that voice two names.

But first of all, let us return to the mountain,
And a three scenes.

The first scene is in the summer of 1773, almost exactly 250 years ago,
Where a man called Charles Mason, walks round this corner,
And sees something that he has been searching all over the British Isles for,
He looks up and he sees the perfect mountain.

Charles Mason has been sent by the astronomer royal, the Rev Nevile Maskelyne to find the perfect mountain.

The reason that the Rev Nevile Maskelyne, Astronomer Royal believes that if you find the perfect mountain, then you would be able to do an experiment to find the weight of the earth.

You see the reason he believes this is because he has studied the theory of gravity of Isaac Newton, which says that gravity happens
When two objects of mass exert a force on *each other*.

He believes this crazy thing,
That when this apple here falls to earth
Not only is the earth pulling the apple
The apple is also pulling the earth.

And the reason you don't realise this is because the apple is too small for you to see that Newton's theory was that you couldn't see this with an apple and an earth
But you could see if it you looked at objects which were similar in size, like a planet and a sun.

But Nevile Maskelyne believed that you didn't need two planets
You might just be able to measure it, if you took a planet and a mountain.
Other people said, no way, even the mountain wouldn't be big enough to make a difference
But Maskelyne believed you would, if you could find the perfect mountain
And in 1773 Charles Mason found it, Schiehallion with its symmetrical shape, its steep sides,
is distance from other hills, this mountain, might just be big enough to help you see that the mountain isn't just pulled towards the earth, but also that the earth is pulled towards the mountain.

So in 1774, Rev Nevil Maskelyne himself, came to Scotland,
With a huge team of workmen, built two observatories, one on the north of the mountain
And one on the south

In atrocious weather at the south station he took
169 measurements against 73 stars

And on the North
168 measurements against 69 stars

And from this he worked out that the difference in angle between the plumbines on the North and the South
Was 54 arc seconds – an arc minute is $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of a degree and an arc second is $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of an arc minute
54 arc seconds is a tiny tiny amount
He worked out that 42 arc seconds were due to the curvature of the earth between the North and the south
But 11.6 of them were due to gravity, the plumbines being pulled towards the earth.

He made a rough estimate for the weight and volume of the mountain,
And from this was able to calculate the weight and density of the earth
And thus announced that the weight of the earth was twice that of Schiehallion
This was a tremendous result, and in 1775 Maskelyne was awarded the prestigious Copley medal.
But not only this he had also demonstrated the truth of Newton's theory
That the earth is attracted to the apple and the apple to the earth
By showing that a plumbine could be attracted to a mountain.

The third scene is this
In 1775 and 1776 Charles Hutton the surveyor returns to the mountain,
They put 1,000 points all over the mountain to measure it,
They join together the points of equal height on maps, creating the first every contour lines
They measure distances with a device invented by a another clergyman the Gunter's chain,
And they refine the calculation
And announce that earth had a density of $17,804/9,993$ or $9/5$ of the Mountain
And that the density of the earth was $4,500 \text{ kg m}^{-3}$ within 20% of the value accepted today.

Look at all this –
The theory of gravitation
the search for the perfect mountain
The movement of plumbines against the stars
The measurement of the size of a mountain

Ideas, and laws and physics
And gravity
And measurement and stars and maths
And inclement weather
And determination
And curiosity

And I want to put all of that into a bundle all that holds all of this,
And I want to give it a name
I want to give it a name which is a Hebrew word
The Hebrew word is Hochmah

Wisdom

Wisdom is the idea that there is pattern and sense to the world
That there is wisdom and maths, and pattern and laws
And laws that hold gravity and angles
And laws that hold the planets
Hochmah
Wisdom

And you maybe want to say at this point
Isn't wisdom the thing that says you fear the Lord, and you are faithful, and you don't steal
and you work like an aunt, and you don't return to folly, and don't get caught in a pledge to
your neighbour

All the things in the book of proverbs
That talk about a pattern to ordinary life
That's wisdom, that's hochmah.

But Proverbs says this,
It's both
Fear of the Lord, and the planting of the mountains
It's the master worker of creation, and also the thing that says "don't gossip"

I love that all these clergymen and religious believers were involved in this work
Rev Maskelyne
Rev Gunter with his chain
And Isaac Newton – fascinated by God.

Because it's all one,
The pattern to our living,
Hochmah.

Now did you notice
That the word Hochmah never appeared in the passage
Or the word wisdom

Why is that
Because at this point
Hochmah is not being spoken about
Hochmah is doing the speaking
And she says
I
Me
I was there in creation
I rejoiced in the inhabited world
I delighted in the children of Adam

Hochmah is a me
Hochmah is like a person
Hochmah is not just a law, hochmah has personhood
Hochmah isn't just a rule, Hochmah has a voice

And now I want to read another passage
Which uses very similar language to Proverbs,
This is from Colossians chapter 1

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶ for in ^[h] him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is before all things, and in ^[i] him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

But now I want to add another word to this,
And this time I want to use a Greek word
The Greek word is one we know really well
The word is Christus.
Anointed one.

The wisdom we meet in Proverbs
Is the Christ
Is the son
Is the one who died

The one who holds the mountain
Is the one who on the cross
Also held me

That all the rules, and all the maths and all the stars
All that was studied by Mason, and Maskelyne and Hutton and Newton
Was ultimately him

Christ.

All that delighted with God, and shaped the mountains, and at the last reconciled them
Was him

He was there at the beginning
He was there in 1773 – when Mason found the mountain
He was there in 1774 – when Maskeyline looked at his plumbline and looked at the stars
He was there in the terrible weather of 1775 and 1776 when Hutton measured

He was always there
And he's here now,
The Christ
The cosmic, mountain shaping, gravity guiding Christ

And he says this listen to me
Here me
Be present to me
Delight in me
For I delight in you

Let us worship in,

AMEN

Hymn CH4 147 All creatures of our God and king (verse 1, 2, 3, 7)

- 1 All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
alleluia, alleluia !
Bright brother sun with golden beam,
clear sister moon with softer gleam :
*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia !*
- 2 Swift rushing wind, so wild and strong,
high clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia !
New-breaking dawn, in praise rejoice,
and lights of evening, find a voice :
- 3 Cool flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your Lord to hear,
alleluia, alleluia !
Fire, with your flames so fierce and bright,
giving to all both warmth and light :
- 7 Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness,
O praise him, alleluia !
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One :

St Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)
translated William Henry Draper (1855–1933) (*alt.*)

Prayer for others

O Christ the master worker
Would make of us what you summon us to be

Call out what is wise
Call out what is love
Call out what is faith

And shape what is to speak
And shape what is to care
And shape our souls to believe

Lead us to places where you may make us wise
And to places where we may be wise

As your work in us is wise
May the work we do be wise

Through us may there be
Creation tended
Souls inspired
Bodies loved
Minds taught
Community built.

Here our prayer
Where the earth is torn, and the waters poisoned
May we better steward the earth.

Where there is war and the weapons fly
May we find the path of peace

Where there neglect and poverty destroys
May we play our part in the work of justice

Hear our prayers now for all who need you,
In the silence we name them before you
Silence

And now hear us in the prayer that Jesus taught us

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
AMEN

CH4 153 Great is thy faithfulness Thomas O Chisholm

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and seed-time and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Refrain

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain

Blessing

Circle me, Lord.
Keep protection near
And danger afar.
Circle me, Lord
Keep hope within.
Keep doubt without.
Circle me, Lord.
Keep light near
And darkness afar.
Circle me, Lord.
Keep peace within.
Keep evil out.

(david adam)

