

- <sup>4</sup> *Who has gone up to heaven and come down?  
Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands?  
Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?  
Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is his name, and the name of his son?  
Tell me if you know!*
- <sup>5</sup> *“Every word of God is flawless;  
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. (Proverbs 30:4,5)*

### **Trust in God’s Power**

Have you ever noticed how excited weather guys get? They’ll break into your favorite TV show and tell you that there might be weather some time at some place, maybe. Once, when we lived on the other side of the state, they broke to tell us that maybe there had been a tornado in some little town. They announced they were going live to their weather reporter on the scene. But when they did, the reporter wasn’t on the scene – he was in the van on the way there. He reported that he was still in the car and he didn’t know what had happened because he wasn’t there yet – but we should stay tuned because probably something had happened.

Why do these guys get so excited? Because weather is one of the most powerful forces that we will ever experience on this earth. I’ve never seen a tornado with my own eyes, but imagine how terrified you would feel if the winds were ripping up trees and tearing off shingles and shattering windows all around you and then you heard the roar of the tornado. I’ve heard it described like the loudest freight train you’ll ever hear. I don’t know what that would feel like from personal experience, but the Bible often uses storms to describe God’s power. The Old Testament likes to say that God rides on the storms. But when the Bible does that, it’s not just looking for a really cool image, the way a sports team does when it calls itself the Hurricanes or the Lightning. God pictures his power in the most graphic terms we can understand because he wants us to trust that he’s going to use that power for our good. That’s the message we have before us today: **Trust in God’s power.**

#### **I.**

In two of our readings for today, we see God’s power over storms. In the gospel lesson, Jesus spoke and the wind and waves were calm. The reading from the book of Acts is more like what we usually experience. Paul was on a ship caught in huge storm at sea. It went on for days and the people on the boat had given up hope. But God who sent the storm did not allow it to harm one person on that boat, even when he used that storm to destroy it. God decided what damage it could and could not do. That principle is true in our lives, too. **Trust in God’s power over the universe.**

The idea of controlling the weather has long been a staple of science fiction stories and movies. Even before airplanes were invented, people tried to find ways to seed clouds and make it rain. But even with modern aviation and science, nothing has ever really come of it. We are never going to be able to control the weather. We can’t even predict it accurately. Over the last two weeks, there must have been at least five days when the weather report said we were going to have rain, but not a drop fell at my house. God is the only one who can control the weather. The book of Proverbs asks us this morning, **“Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands?”** All the tornados and hurricanes and typhoons on earth are like a little pile of sand in God’s hand. He decides when to stir them up and when to calm them down. It’s nothing for him.

But that’s not all our text says. It asks, **“Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?”** God controls the water, too. Water is a tremendously difficult thing to control. When I was a kid, my dad bought a second hand above ground pool. We were really excited about it because in our experience only rich kids had pools and we were far from rich. Because it was second hand, my dad had concerns about how well it was going to hold up, so he bought a role of tin and reinforced it all the way around. Then we built a deck for it. While we were building that deck, the pool ripped open. I will never forget standing there on the deck while this four foot high wave of water washed out and went down the street and carried away pieces of the motor of the junker car my brother was trying to rebuild. Water is impossible to control. You know, I can’t even carry a cup of coffee

from my house to my office without spilling it. But God has gathered all the oceans of this world, all the lakes and rivers, all the water that covers seventy percent of this planet's surface, into his cloak. He controls it all. It never falls or floods or runs without his say so.

The book of Proverbs asks, **“Who has established all the ends of the earth?”** God made this planet. Our modern age chooses to forget that truth. But it is his. And it's not a like a watch that he put together and wound up and then let run on its own. God is in control. He operates every aspect of our world every single day. Not just the natural things like weather and water. God is in control of all nations, of all of history, of all that happens around us. That really is the point of the question that begins the reading: **“Who has gone up to heaven and come down?”** Notice the question at the end of the verse, **“What is his name, and the name of his son?”** Of course, God expects us to know the answer. God the Father runs this world. The name of his Son is Jesus. He runs the world, too.

We could even include the Holy Spirit, although he's not mentioned here. But God mentions his Son to remind us that we're not just talking about power. We're talking about love. If God had no love for us, then our lives would truly be terrifying. We would have to pay for all our sins. We would be condemned to facing all the horrors of life in a sinful world without any hope because we deserve those horrors. But the God who wrapped the waters in his cloak and holds the winds in his hands, who established the world and runs it, that God sent his Son down here to save this world.

When Jesus had lived and died and risen again, he ascended back up into heaven to run this world for our good. So every beautiful day that we are here when we enjoy the wonders of creation and every black and terrifying and painful day that we experience here when cry out to God for rescue – every day of this world's existence, the God of love is running all things for our good. No disaster can touch you unless he decides that it's what's best for you. No matter where you go or what you chose to do with your life, he is in charge. And he loves you. And he will send blessing and trial according to what you need most to make sure that your faith survives and you reach eternal life. Trust that the love that sent Jesus to die for you will take care of you and bring you home.

## II.

Where do we find God's power? Obviously, in one sense, we see it all around us. We experience it when we have surgery and then heal or when we pray and God rescues us from some problem that we maybe even created for ourselves. But there is another way we experience God's power: in his Word. That's what our reading reminds us of today. First it calls us to see God's power in his rule of creation and then it tells us, **“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.”** So my friends, **Trust in God's power in his Word.**

In the very first verses of the Bible, God shows us the power of his word. How did God make the world? He spoke! He said, **“Let there be light!”** and light came into being! When I speak, I'm lucky if other people stop talking long enough to actually hear what I'm saying. I haven't noticed any great power in my words to get people to do what I want them to do. But God speaks and things happen. He spoke the world into existence. His word has real power. That same word is what we trust and cling to. Christianity is a religion of the Word. God's Word tells us what we need to know, who our God is and what to believe. God's Word gives us our faith. St. Paul says that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Now, you might be thinking that we're really talking about two different things here. The word that God spoke out loud during the six days of creation is different from the word of God in the Bible. But how? They are both words that God speaks. They are both words that God says have power to create life and to call things into existence that never existed before. The only difference between them is that in the Bible God gives his word a human form so that we can speak it. But it is still his word. He still is the one who really says it through the human writers and human preachers. All the power is his.

He says that his word is flawless. The Hebrew word implies that it is something a master craftsman has made. It has no errors. It has no limitations or deficiencies. It doesn't need to be updated or improved on. God has spoken. He's told us that we need to know. He's given us a power that will protect and guide us and bring us home to heaven, a power that changes our lives forever.

That flawless word comes to us in two perfect ways. First, God's Word demands a perfect life of love from us. God tells us to love God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. He explains to us what that means with commandments like having no other gods, not misusing his name, coming to hear his word

regularly. God tells us to put him first in our lives and then to love our neighbor as we love ourselves, so we don't lie to them or hurt them or steal from them. So we honor our marriages and their marriages. So we let the word of Christ rule every aspect of our lives here. If we don't, God tells us what happens: death and hell. That is all God's Word. And it has a tremendous power to strike terror into our hearts, to make us see our sin for what it really is. God's Word forces us to see how selfish we have been, how many times we've talked a good game about loving him but really, we loved ourselves and we did what we wanted and we told ourselves it was really for everybody's good. God's Word wrenches that admission out of our hearts and creates a sense of guilt and fear.

But God's perfect word isn't done then. It also comes to us with life and hope and forgiveness. It tells us that Jesus was perfect even though we aren't. He loved God and he loved the people around him the way God tells us to. And he did that in our place. It counts for us. Then Jesus offered that perfect life on the cross and paid for all our sin and failure and selfishness. He paid for all the times we lied to ourselves and to God about what we were really doing and why. He suffered all the punishment that our sin deserves and then he rose to tell us that we are forgiven and free. We are loved by God and we are his children and we will live with him forever.

That perfect word is a shield for our hearts. It protects us from despair and false belief and even unbelief, because that all powerful word of God gives us faith and it keeps our faith alive in all the darkness and sin of this world. That perfect word of God speaks all his promises to us. It tells us that he runs the world for our good and makes sure that every disaster that hits our lives turns into eternal blessing for us. That word is a shield against the devil and all his lies, against the unbelieving world that wants to stamp our faith out of existence. It's a shield against the sinner in our own hearts who is determined to drag us away from God. That word breaks all their power. Even when it looks like the devil and the world are winning, even when our sinful nature has the upper hand, God's Word is still our shield and protection. It defends us even when we can't see it. The only way we can lose that protection is if we desert it. But God promises that all those who take refuge in him – therefore in his word – are protected all through this life. So we will reach the life to come.

There is no greater power than God. He runs the world with his word. He changes our lives with the word put into the Scripture for us, the word that tells us about Christ. Today, tomorrow – for decades to come, if God gives you that much life, God will hold that shield up for you. Take refuge under it, knowing that God will never leave you or forsake you. Amen.