

The Cloud

Anselm of Canterbury

8.6.2023



THE JOURNEY
CHURCH

SCRIPTURE:

Proverbs 2:1-5

SERMON NOTES:

We begin a brand new series this weekend entitled “The Cloud.” It is a reference to the verse we just read a few moments ago in Hebrews 12:1. The Hebrews writer says, **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”** The writer says we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. What is the writer referring to? They are referring to the Christians who have lived and died before us, whose witness teaches us and instructs us about how to live the Christian life too. Before the Hebrews 12:1 passage, talking about the great cloud of witnesses, Hebrews 11 gives a list of the type of witnesses we are surrounded by. Hebrews 11 is called the Hall of Faith by many because it outlines the faith of men and women that should inspire ours.

Over the next 4 weeks, we're going to look at 4 different individuals from different parts of the world, from different eras of time, and we are going to look at their lives and witnesses. In doing so, we will not only grow more knowledgeable about other believers from church history, but we will learn lessons from their lives that can be applied to our own. One of the challenges we have today as 21st century American Christians, is that we can have what C.S. Lewis called chronological snobbery. We can be so wrapped up in our present age and present issues, that we fail to know or appreciate the rich history of Christians who have walked the earth for 2,000 years before us. We are a part of, not only the visible church, but the invisible church. We are a part of a lower-case “c” church called The Journey, that is the visible church. But we are also a part of a capital “C” church that spans all places and all times, including every believer that has ever called upon the name of the Lord. When Hebrews 12:1 talks about the great cloud of witnesses, these believers of old are on that list. The person we are learning about today is Anselm of Canterbury.

One of things that separates human beings from all other creatures is our capacity to think and reason with high levels of precision. In fact, this is one of the things that

separate us from other animals. We are told to love the Lord our God with all our mind. Thinking is one of the ways that we love God and others. Thinking is one of the ways we fuel knowledge of God and worship Him rightly. One of the reasons God has given us minds is so we might seek out and find all the reasons that exist to love and treasure Him above all things.

Scripture Exegesis: Proverbs 2:1-5

The first 4 verses of this passage are setting up a conditional command. Verse 5 delivers the promise and payoff if those conditions are met.

VS 1 -- If you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,

This is about believing and trusting the Scriptures. God has revealed His Word to us. To receive them isn't just to believe them, but to embrace them. To trust them. To treasure them.

VS 2 -- making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding;

Making our ear attentive is about seeking to learn. It's about wanting to gain wisdom and knowledge from His words we've received. The posture of the heart is to learn and hear God through His Word.

VS 3-4 -- yes, if you call for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as hidden treasures

This is about prayer. Calling for insight. Asking for understanding. This happens when we truly desire to know God's Word and understand. We seek it like a treasure. Eager. Ambitious to find it.

VS 5 -- then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

This is the promise. If we do these things, we will gain the knowledge of God. The individual who deploys their mind to receive God's Word, seeking it, desiring wisdom, and praying for understanding, we receive it. God will give it. But we must put our mind to work. We must think.

This passage captures so well the life and contributions of Anselm of Canterbury.

Biographical Sketch:

Anselm is one of the most important figures in the 11th century, roughly 900 years ago. He is most known for his philosophical and theological contributions. He developed and articulated what we now called the Ontological proof of the existence of God and in

theology, the satisfaction theory of the atonement and the relationship of the Virgin Birth to Original Sin. We'll talk about both of these in more detail shortly.

Anselm was born in 1033 on the Italian side of the Swiss Alps in a place called Aosta. He belonged to a wealthy family and showed an incredible intellectual aptitude. As a young man, he desired to live the monastic life (no marriage or children, just a life dedicated in service to God and others) because of the intellectual reputation the monasteries had. He tried to join the local monastery, but they rejected him. So he left home and went across the Alps to the French side and settled in Normandy. Anselm became a monk in 1060, at the age of 27.

Anselm joined a monastery there and devoted himself to scholarship. He quickly became an instructor to the other monks with his incisive thinking and reasoning skills. Anselm's main theological influence was Augustine (who we've covered in the Cloud). He also subjected himself to strict discipline in his spiritual exercises, often finding during those times is when he had his greatest philosophical and theological insights. He became known throughout the monastic community and surrounding community for his range of insights into human nature, virtue and vices, and the practice of the Christian life.

In 1070, Anselm began writing prayers and meditations that were sent to other monastic communities and noblemen for their own private devotions. This began the period where he began to write some of his philosophical and theological works. During this period of time, Anselm was elected the abbot of the monastery. Then in 1092, when he was 59 years old, Anselm went to England. The position there was open and Anselm was proposed by many to serve as the new bishop. The current king of England (William Rufus) nor Anselm wanted him in the position. But the king fell ill and nearly died, so he changed his mind and nominated Anselm for the role. Anselm attempted to resist the post, but eventually accepted it. This post was called the Arch-bishop of Canterbury, which today in the Church of England (Anglican) is the head of the Church, second only to the King or Queen of England. After King William Rufus recovered from his illness, he tried to have Anselm deposed because he protested the king's attempts to appropriate church lands, offices, and incomes for himself. So Anselm went into exile, even traveling to Rome to appeal to the Pope to be relieved from his office. The pope refused. During this time of exile, Anselm wrote most of his important theological works: *Why the Godman?* *On the Incarnation of the Word*, *on the Virgin Conception* and *on Original Sin*, *On the Proceeding of the Holy Spirit*, and *On the Harmony of the Foreknowledge, the Predestination, and the Grace of God with Free Choice*.

Anselm remained exiled until the death of King William. But soon a new conflict ensued between Anselm and King Henry I, leading Anselm to travel in exile to Rome again. His conflicts with the kings revolved around the tension of who he owed first priority of obedience to: the king or the Pope. He eventually made it back to England where he lived at peace in his final years. As he got older, his body grew weak. He became so ill that he came to dislike all food. It got to the point where he could no longer ride a horse and had to be carried to church services. He did this even up until 5 days before he died. The Tuesday after Palm Sunday, he lost his ability to speak, but he continued to place his hand on people and give the sign of the cross. Then at dawn the next day, on a Wednesday, April 21st, 1109, the great Anselm died. He was 76 years old.

Anselm's Contributions:

There are so many contributions Anselm made to philosophy and theology. In fact, Anselm is considered one of the greatest thinkers and prolific writers of church history. Yet what is fascinating about Anselm is how short and readable his works are. He did not write big long works. He took big complex ideas and created clear, biblical arguments to explain them.

I. Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement

Anselm begins with the question: What is sin? He answers that by saying sin is the withholding by the creature from God the honor that is due Him. So sin is a debt. It is a failure to give God full and proper obedience. He says, "One who does not render this honor [i.e., obedience in every act of will] to God takes away from God what belongs to Him, and dishonors God, and to do this is to sin."

This places man under an obligation. He must not only render to God the obedience due today at this moment, but he must pay the debt he owes God for what he didn't pay. But we can't make reparations. We can't pay the debt. All humanity owes it. The only two options are: be punished or make satisfaction. Mankind cannot make that satisfaction. Nothing we do pays the debt, but only gives to God what He is already owed. But God is just, and He cannot dismiss the offense and forgive us without satisfaction. The creature cannot overturn justice or defraud the Creator of what He is due.

So how can satisfaction be made? Here's what Anselm wrote: ***"Satisfaction cannot be made unless there be some One able to pay God for man's sin something greater than all that is beside God. . . . Now nothing is greater than all that is beside God except God himself. None therefore can make this satisfaction except God. And none ought to make it except man. . . . If, then, it be necessary that the kingdom of heaven***

be completed by man's admission, and if man cannot be admitted unless the aforesaid satisfaction for sin be first made, and if God only can, and man only ought to make this satisfaction, then necessarily One must make it who is both God and man."

In other words, only we owe the debt, but cannot pay it. Only God can pay the debt, but does not owe it. Only a God-man can bear both the guilt man owes and pay the debt incurred. This is why God became a man. This is why Jesus came, died, and rose again. He satisfies the wrath of God and guilt of man.

Have you ever heard this argument before in some form? Yes, it was Anselm who developed this before anyone. Of course, he didn't create the fact. He studied what the Scriptures taught and formulated the argument.

II. Faith and Reason

Anselm believed that once someone was saved by grace, they used their mind to understand and comprehend the historic Christian faith, including the doctrines, arguments, and reasons that it is true. His approach to reflection begins in faith but then achieves understanding through reason. For Anselm, faith and reason are understood to be compatible.

Anselm believed faith was the starting point for seeking understanding. After all, fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom or understanding. He believed faith was more important than reason, but once someone came to faith, they were obligated to understand and utilize their reason and rational thinking to support their faith. He said, "I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand...I believe that unless I first believe, I shall not understand."

For Anselm, faith was the starting point that gave someone the ability to see the rational arguments of the faith. Without that faith, those reasons would lack the power to convince.

III. Ontological Argument for the Existence of God

This argument is not easy. It is a little difficult to follow because it is so philosophical in nature. It is a purely rational argument, meaning, it's not meant to be a Scriptural argument. It is an argument from pure logic and reason. It is the most controversial of all

the traditional proofs for the existence of God (cosmological argument, moral argument, etc.).

The argument goes as follows:

1. The God of Scripture is the greatest conceivable being possible. That means there is not a being that anyone could conceive that could be greater than God.
2. Things can exist only in our imaginations, or they can also exist in reality. Things that exist in reality are always better than things that exist only in our imaginations.
3. If God existed only in our imaginations, He wouldn't be the greatest thing that we can think of, because God in reality would be better.
4. Therefore, God must exist in reality.

This argument has been debated by philosophers since the time of Anselm even up to today. But the key point for us was that Anselm labored to deploy his mind to think so that he could love God and serve others.

IV. The Virgin Birth and Original Sin

Anselm argues why the Virgin Birth was necessary and not superfluous to our salvation. It begins with the concept of Original Sin, which Augustine articulated in his debate with Pelagius. Because every person is guilty of sin from birth, as a result of Adam's fall, then every person is born in need of salvation.

The Savior cannot be born in the same way as every other man or he'd be born with the guilt and sin nature like everyone else. This is why the birth of Christ, conceived by the Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, is so important. Jesus could not be born of the seed of man or he'd be guilty. He was born of God. But he still was born of a woman. Guilt is passed through the seed of man. Mary was not sinless. The point of her Virgin Birth is not to emphasize that she has no sin, it is to emphasize that there is no man involved in this conception. The seed of the man is not involved. This is why Jesus is called the Second Adam. He is conceived without an earthly father, and as such, without guilt or sin. He is able to be our Savior as the One without sin or guilt.

Again, this argument is Anselm's thought process to take Scripture and articulate the meaning and reason behind the texts. We read of the events, but Anselm shows theologically why it was necessary.

You don't have to be a scholar like Anselm. You don't need to have an acumen or intellect like his to be faithful to loving God with all your mind. The promise of Scripture is that if we seek God in His Word with a heart of understanding, desire insight, pursue it with a posture of understanding, then God will provide us knowledge. Thinking produces knowledge of God, and knowledge of God should produce love of God and devotion to Him.

How are you using your mind to love God?

Do you seek to grow and learn regularly?

Do you read and study the Word (and books on it)? Do you participate in classes that can help you?

Seek to grow in your knowledge of God, friends. You'll never regret the investment. Study theology. It doesn't matter if you would ever teach it. It doesn't matter if you're a mechanic, school teacher, business leader, pastor, Uber driver, or bank teller. Every Christian should seek to love God with all their mind by studying to know God more and more accurately according to Scripture.

Anselm helps us to love God by thinking clearly about His Word. He helps us understand the gospel better and love Jesus more. We are thankful for him. But even more so, we know God better because of Him.

REVIEW:

- ❖ Read Proverbs 2:1-5
- ❖ Why should we treasure the Scriptures? How do we treasure Scriptures?
- ❖ How do we incline our hearts to understanding?
- ❖ How do we pray for understanding?
- ❖ What is the result of doing all of this?

REFLECT:

- ❖ How would you define sin?
- ❖ Why did our Savior have to be both fully man and full God?
- ❖ Why must faith precede understanding?
- ❖ Why was the Virgin Birth necessary?

RESPOND:

- ❖ How are you using your mind to love God?

- ❖ What are you doing to grow in your understanding of God?

MEDITATE:

- ❖ Proverbs 3:13-18 - *13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, 14 for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.*

MEMORIZE:

- ❖ Matthew 22:37 - *And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- ❖ Next Gen Pastor - **Larry Davis**
- ❖ Ministry - **Student Ministry**
- ❖ **Pray for our long-term families:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks (departing in October)
- ❖ **Pray for our mid-term sent ones:**
 - Kaesi (gap year - departing in August)
- ❖ **Pray for our short-term teams:**
 - Central Asia team departs in September
- ❖ **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG): Ahar in Nepal**
 - **Population in country:** 2,300
 - **Global population:** 1,736,000
 - **Christian Adherent:** 0.00%
 - **Evangelical:** 0.00%
 - **Primary Religion:** Hinduism
 - **Primary Language:** Awadhi
 - **Summary:** The Ahar in Nepal consider themselves Brahmin, but some Brahmins do not like to mingle with them. The Ahar are usually the people who own most of the land in the areas where they live. They avoid menial work as a vocation and are thus ranked above other working castes in the ritual hierarchy. They only marry people from similar communities. They are Hindu by faith and worship Narsingdeo, their family deity, and Ganwat, their village deity.

- **Prayer Focus:** Pray the Lord would give Ahar families understanding and responsive hearts when they hear about the love of Christ. May they not be satisfied with their own righteousness. Scripture materials in both printed and recorded form exist in the Awadhi language. Pray they would be effective.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App
<https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>