

“Great and Marvelous Deeds”  
Revelation 15:3 & 4  
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The Rev. David MacPherson  
First Presbyterian Church  
Lake Forest, Illinois

It's great to be here this morning. Thank you for the invitation to share in your service of worship to God. Before I go any further, I have a very pleasant duty to perform which is to extend to you all warm Christian greetings from your brothers and sisters in Christ in Moyobamba, Peru. As your pastor was reminding us a moment ago, we are indeed part of one family — the family of God.

I have a question to ask you today. Are you singers? Listen well; I'm saying singers not sinners. I would hope the answer would be clear; we've already had the call to confession. The question again is, “Are you singers?”

Are there any aspiring American Idol singers in the congregation this morning? I don't know how you have answered the question. Some of you may have said, “No the singers are up in the choir loft.” I have news for you. Christians are incurable singers.

Our reason for being, our greatest delight, our highest calling is to sing praises to our God. In Peru, we love to sing and that is one of the reasons why services often break the 60 minute barrier. Sometimes they break it by another 60 minutes but don't worry I'm not going to bring that particular cultural trait to you this morning. One of the songs we sing often is the words we have just read in the book of Revelation. *Great and amazing are your deeds. Our God, the almighty, just and true are your ways, King of the Nations.*”

This morning I want to think about the words of this song and very particularly the first line, great and marvelous are your works Lord God, the Almighty. I want to share four points about these words: We ought to bear in mind as we read and sing them that these are words of: 1) personal testimony 2) historic and cross-cultural identification and prophetic identification 3) prophetic confidence and 4) enthusiastic and urgent invitation.

Words of Personal Testimony: Believers sing these words because they give expression to our personal appreciation and experience of God. We have discovered and know this God who does great and marvelous deeds. Because we know him, we sing these words. We see them in His work, creation. Yesterday as we were taken down to the shore of Lake Michigan and as I looked across the sparkling, frozen expanse and the beautiful white snow who cannot stand back and not say, “great and marvelous deeds.”

As we have the privilege of living in the foothills of the Andes in Peru and we look over the tropical rain forest we say does great and marvelous deeds. As Christians as we consider His work of salvation and as we look at Jesus and the love of the Father who so loved the world that he sent His son to die we stand back in awe and wonder and say great and marvelous deeds are thy deeds. As we look in our own lives and we see our lives transformed by grace we sing with Isaac Newton, “amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.”

One of the reasons the church in Peru is growing is the body of believers has a story to

tell and a song to sing. Others hear the story, the song and want to be part of it. Sometimes as Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Moyobama, I try to step back from the business and activity and contemplate God's grace and marvelous deeds. In doing so I am in good company because that is what God did when he finished the work of creation and on the seventh day he stood back and contemplated and was able to say, how great and marvelous are my deeds.

When I step back as pastor I visualize a young man named Noah who came into our congregation to lead the youth group and hide his drug selling activities. Noah was surprised by grace as he was brought to faith by Jesus Christ. Today in this month he begins pastoring a church of his own in a town called Orange Orchard.

Personal testimony: Stepping back again I see that young couple whose marriage was a hair's breath from being destroyed by unfaithfulness and yet as they experienced the restoring of forgiveness sought and forgiveness granted, a home is restored and a marriage saved. I say great and marvelous are thy deeds.

As I look at 300 little children as they come through the doors of Andes Sober Christian School Monday through Friday, I remember it was started a few years ago by the congregation. The children are being taught to love as Jesus loved, praying every thought captive to Christ. I stand back and say great and marvelous are thy deeds. You may say, "yes that is my experience of our God." These are words of personal testimony. Are they your words of personal testimony as well?

Historical and cross-cultural identification: These words, great and marvelous are thy deeds, are historical words and have cross cultural identification. What do I mean by that? These words are being sung in heaven. We didn't read the whole chapter in Revelation to locate the passage in its context. John's vision of heaven includes the angels and the church triumphant singing these words. Were these words penned by an angel? No, the passage tells us in verse 3, "and they sing the song of Moses." In my mind, Moses is a strong man who penned these words, sang them and led the people of God.

As he sang, so Joshua who followed him sang. David sang the song and as we read these words, it is the song of the Lamb, about the Lamb. The church universal through the centuries have sung these words too. As we sing them we join in a choir that spans millennia. I love singing scripture. I am singing the words that are being sung by God even as they crossed the Jordon into the promised land. They are words of historic identification.

Cross-cultural Identification: As we sing great and amazing are your deeds, God the Almighty, in English, they are also being sung in Moyobamba in Spanish and maybe in communities across the globe in Arabic, Hebrew and Kurdish. As we sing these words we join in the great choir of the church, singing praises to the one who created us, redeemed us, and provides for us. Listen as I read verse 4 of the psalm. Lord who will not fear and glorify your name; for all nations will come and worship before you; for your judgments have been revealed.

Words of prophetic confidence: Why do I say that? When you think of God's great deeds do you sometimes fall into the temptation of thinking that it's in the past. Yes, we read it in the pages of scripture and read it in the pages of history but God's great and marvelous deeds have

been done. But don't fret. God has many marvelous deeds yet to do. Maybe as a congregation as you look back on a rich history that I read about and saw the pictures at the entrance of the church, maybe you look back and say those were the heady days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when we founded a school, college and university when we had to build a bigger sanctuary. That was then but today it is different. Today, we live in a day of small things.

The chill wind of disbelief has come through our churches emptying them, and we say great and marvelous deeds is nice to remember but it is not for today. We are wrong to think it. God remains a God who does great and marvelous things. These are words of prophetic confidence. God has great and marvelous things to do today, here in Lake Forest, Chicago, Peru, Moyobamba.

As I look around me when I have the privilege of being in Moyobamba, I see what God has done in the recent past, a school started and continuing. It should push us to be instruments of God to do greater and more marvelous deeds as we look to the future as a congregation. We look to start a university in Peru because only 1% of the population goes on to higher education because they do not have opportunity or a place to go. We say this is a marvelous deed to be done for our young people so we might provide for them in the name of Jesus.

Where you are, you need to see what God would have you do. Sometimes as we dream those dreams there are the doubting voices; it costs too much and can't be done. But we have a God where there is no impossibility. Let us sing these words together as the church universal. Let us join together and support one another in the work God would have us do.

Word of enthusiastic and urgent invitation: Not everybody is singing. Maybe within these walls not all are singing. But, certainly as we go beyond these walls everybody is singing praise to God is at best a quaint anachronism and for others a delusion to be pitied or despised. That is our reality and why is it so?

Why do so many people not get it that they are created for this great purpose to glorify God and to enjoy him forever and to sing praises to his name? They don't know the author of these great and marvelous deeds. These words are not for them. For those of us for whom they are personal testimony by grace we have a task to perform.

These words are an invitation. Enthusiastic and urgent invitations that we might go out from this place and sing the song and live the life and invite others so they might join with us in singing to this God whose works are great and marvelous. Invite them that they might know this God who can be known only by faith in Jesus Christ. We must invite them even as we read a little of the song as it continues. In verse 4 it is written, "who will not fear and glorify him?" Moses says you are a God who is worthy to be praised by all not just by Israel, not just by this closed circle. Invite some who are behind closed doors in the mansions of Lake Forest; invite the homeless in the inner city. For us the task is to invite those in the slums of Lima or the pueblos of the Andes or the villages in the forest. We invite as we sing, as we live and as we love. Amen.