

How Majestic is Your Name!

Psalm 8

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I don't know if you have ever had this experience, but I remember the first time I did. Here's what happened. A friend of mine in Pittsburg, Texas, had gotten his pilot's license and wanted me to go flying with him. At the time he asked me, I was a young husband with a young family and small kids. We also had a very busy church, and I was a bit overwhelmed with all that was going on in my life. We took off in his plane, and as we climbed higher, everything below us got smaller and smaller, which it should have, but the Lord used the experience of watching everything get smaller to give me the realization of what I had been focusing on in life.

It was as if the Lord impressed on my heart how small all my cares and anxieties truly were. We only went up a few thousand feet but it was enough for the Lord to help me see things from His perspective. It wasn't that any of my problems went away but my heart changed. My view of God was enlarged.

My problem was that I was so wrapped up in my life and in my daily routine that I was no longer able to see the greatness of God. In my life, my daily routine and responsibilities were bigger than God. I needed a change of perspective and a change of heart.

Have you ever had that experience? Quite often, this is how we live our lives. God is small, and our problems, pressures, and responsibilities are big. Listen to me, I'm not trying to minimize serious issues you are struggling with in your life, but the fact is, God is always bigger than our problems.

One of the key aims of Psalm 8 is to help us get our heads above the clouds so we can be reminded of the greatness of God. Let's pray and get to work on Psalm 8. Let's see if we can breathe in the majestic air of Psalm 8 and have our view of God enlarged.

Psalm 7 ends with David saying in v. 17,

*"I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing
praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High."*

Then Psalm 8 opens with the praise Psalm 7 refers to,

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

Friends, after several Psalms of lament (Psalm 3-7), we come to a Psalm of praise in Psalm 8. In Psalm 8, David focuses on the big picture of the glory and the grace of God to mankind. Psalm 8 is also considered a *Psalm of Creation* because it draws in the creation account in Genesis 1-2.

Psalm 8 is a masterpiece of biblical poetry. It celebrates the majesty of God revealed in creation and the dignity He has bestowed upon humanity. It moves from wonder at the greatness of God to astonishment at His care for us, and finally to our role in His world. As a result, it has an obvious hymnic quality. Over the years, numerous songs have been written that use Psalm 8 as their biblical basis.

However, Psalm 8 finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ as the ultimate man who vanquished God's enemies and saved His people so that they may rule and reign with Him. I want to give an overview of Psalm 8 before we dig into the text.

Psalm 8 begins and ends with the same declaration. Verse 1a and v. 9 declare the glory and majesty of God:

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

Then David, when he was most likely standing under a night sky, is overwhelmed by God's glory and majesty, and he declares:

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers..."

As he takes in the glory of God displayed in the universe, he marveled that the Creator of galaxies would care for weak human beings, much less give them dominion over His creation.

So, now, that we have the picture of Psalm 8, let's work our way through these nine verses. May the Lord enlarge our view the glory of our Creator. May He give us view with fresh eyes to understand the dignity that He has given man. May we behold the majesty of the Son of Man for whom all of this was created. Finally, as we breath the majestic air of Psalm 8, may our hearts be renewed and refreshed with the greatness of our God. I have three points to help us walk through Psalm 8.

I. Praise God for His Creative Majesty (vv. 1-2)

David begins Psalm 8 by leading us into a song of worship and praise of our Covenant-Keeping God. Listen to v. 1a again:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

In v. 1, we find two titles for God. Again, we see the covenant name for God, "LORD," Yahweh. As I have mentioned in previous sermons, the Psalms often use the covenant name of God. We will find it repeated throughout the Psalter.

However, just as a side note of application: Sometimes, pastors and preachers are concerned about sounding repetitive in their preaching. I get it. That is a concern of mine until I get to the gospel. Friends, pastors and preachers should not shy away from being repetitive with the gospel.

When we see the title LORD (in all caps) in the Psalms, we are looking at the covenant name of God, Yahweh. Here's what should happen as we read this word: Our minds should gravitate to the fulfillment of that covenant in Jesus Christ life, death, and resurrection. It's one of those words that functions like the tip of an ice berg. It is only one little word but the theology underneath goes deep and is massive.

So, think about the repetition of God's covenant name this way. Here's what I want you to consider. Do you know who does not shy away from repeating himself – Satan. He has no problem repeating his temptations to sin or messages that seek to train you to think differently about what is actually sin. He will use the same messages of the glories of sin over and over to try to retrain how you think about sin and water down God's word.

Just consider some of the messages of Satan that we hear repeated in our culture: "Love is love," "My body, my choice," "That's not a baby, it's a clump of cells," "A person's sexuality is gender fluid," "Men and women are birthing people," and "By blocking transgender treatments on kids, you're causing them to commit suicide."

Friends, the enemy doesn't shy away from repeating his messages and temptations. Neither should we shy away from repeating the gospel. It is not only preaches that shouldn't shy away from repeating the gospel but Christ's disciples shouldn't either.

There is nothing wrong with bringing the gospel into the normal flow of our conversations in order to help us be witnesses for Christ. As a new semester begins at Iowa State and in our schools, as a student, how can you bring the gospel into your conversations?

Think about gospel repetition and parenting: If you are a parent, just remember that your home is built on and strengthened by repetition and redundancy. You eat meals, do chores, go to school, and go to work. All of this is done over and over and so moms and dads ought to make the gospel repetition part of the normal conversation in the family's life.

Finally, on Sunday mornings, you should expect me to bring the gospel to bear on the text that is being preached that morning. As a preacher, I should strive to present the person and work of Christ in every sermon. It is a message the bears repeating.

Friends, the demand for hearing the gospel is no less critical, relentless, and essential today. We must not apologize for being repetitive when it comes to the message of Jesus Christ. It is in God's name, Yahweh, that we find the message of the gospel. It is that name that points us to the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The next title for God that we see in v. 1 is "*our Lord*" (*Adonai, our Master*). *Adonai* means God is both eternal and self-existent. It means He is our King.

These two titles for God are His names, and knowing His name points us to the importance of knowing God and understanding His character and perfections, as He reveals Himself to us in His word and in His creation.

God's glory is not hidden. It is visible "*in all the earth*" because He has set His glory above the heavens. Friends, the heavens themselves cannot contain the fullness of His majesty. The heavens, as beautiful and majestic as they are cannot contain the glory of God. God's glory far exceeds what we see with our eyes.

Yet the LORD's glory is made known in surprising ways. Look in v. 2:

*"Out of the mouths of babies and infants, you have established strength
because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger."*

In this verse, we find the incredible glory and power of God's word. God silences His enemies not with displays of military power or with a display cosmic powers but through the weak cries of children.

Most likely the words "*babies and infants*" represent the people of Israel. They are seen as weak in comparison to the mighty unbelieving Gentiles who would be their "*foes, enemies, and avengers.*"

To be more specific, the "*babies and infants*" are faithful worshippers in Israel and those who oppose them may be from inside Israel or from the outside of Israel. David's point is that God reveals His glory and majesty through the weak, insignificant and unimpressive mouths of His people so that the strength, majesty, and glory belong to God alone.

Jesus quoted this verse in Matthew 21:16, after clearing the merchants and money changers out of the temple. The religious leaders saw all that Jesus was doing, then they heard the children singing, "*Hosanna! To the Son of David,*" in the temple. At this point the religious leaders had enough and asked Him if He heard what they were saying because what they were saying was that Jesus was the God of Psalm 8. Then He replied to them:

*"Yes, have you never read [Psalm 8 where David says]¹, 'Out of the mouth of
infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?"*

Friends, the praise of the weak shames the strength of the proud. Brothers and sisters, we are created to visibly behold God's majesty not only in the grandeur of the heavens (like I viewed when I flew in the airplane with my friend) but also in the weakness of our human voices as we profess our faith publicly in Jesus. Jesus delights to use the voices of weak gospel people to display His power in our lives.

One of the ways I experience the strength of the glory and majesty of God is in our worship on Sunday mornings. I don't know if you have ever noticed that the instrumentation of the musicians and singers on stage is intentionally minimized so that we may be able to hear one another sing. Our voices become the instruments of God's praise in our corporate reading and singing. The design of our worship services is intentional and it is uncommon for most modern churches to worship this way. Worship is not meant to be a concert or production it is meant for weak gospel people to proclaim the gospel to one another.

Friends, weak unimpressive gospel people will silence the noisy restlessness of the world when we praise Jesus Christ. Friends when we as plain, simple, unsophisticated people praise our humble Savior with the weak, foolish word of the gospel the enemy is defeated and we are strengthened.

II. Praise God for Man's Place in God's Creative Majesty (vv. 3-8)

¹ You must fill in the blank in your mind with Psalm 8 when Jesus questioned the religious leaders.

Now David's eyes move from the weakness of man to beginning to understand how man is loved by God and has dignity. Verses 3-8 break down into two sections.

The first section is a question: *Who is man in his weakness?* (vv. 3-4) To answer this question, David turns his eyes upward:

*"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place..."*

The imagery is stunning. The heavens, as vast and amazing as they are, are only the work of God's fingers. Now, here's what you need to know – God's doesn't have fingers. This is what is called anthropomorphic language. It is used to make the point of how great God's creative power is.

David was confronted by the immensity of what he saw in the night sky, and so he felt the insignificance of human life. As he marveled that the God who created galaxies he wonders why He would even think of us, let alone care for us. As a result, he asks the LORD:

"What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

David uses two different Hebrew words to describe human beings. His point is that all humanity is weak, frail, and insignificant in comparison to God.

However, David's question becomes more intense when the Son of God takes on our human nature in the incarnation. At this point, the weakness of human beings is now attributed to Jesus, who is the true Son of Man.

Verses 5-8 give us part two of this section. David answers his question: *Who is the man crowned in his glory?* The good news is that as David's eyes turn upward to God, he is astonished at the dignity God has bestowed on mankind:

*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him
with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your
hands; you have put all things under his feet ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the
beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever
passes along the paths of the seas.*

These verses look back at creations in Genesis 1:26. David's intent is to show us how mankind's dignity is derived from God. Humanity was created in God's image and commissioned to rule over creation as His vice-regents. Man is created to have dominion over the domestic animals (sheep and oxen); the wild creatures (beasts of the field); the birds of the heavens; and the fish of the sea.

In other words, all creation is placed under man's care. This is incredible dignity that God has given to people who are made of dust. He has entrusted the stewardship of His creation to frail humanity and yet, the Lord, in His grace, has crowned us with glory.

However, the story doesn't end there. Humanity has failed to exercise the rule entrusted to us. Instead of trusting in God we sought to be our own gods. Romans 8:20 says that because of our sin, creation was subjected to futility.

Yet, again, the story doesn't end here. Futility is not the future of God's people and God's creation. God sent to us the True Psalm 8 man to restore God's people to more than our dignity at creation and begin the ending of the futility found in creation.

Here's where the New Testament helps us understand Psalm 8. Hebrews 2:5-10 applies Psalm 8 to Jesus:

*For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are
speaking. ⁶ It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that you are mindful
of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷ You made him for a little
while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸*

putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Jesus was made “*lower than the angels*” in His incarnation. Through His death and resurrection, He was crowned with glory and honor. All things are placed under His feet.

So, where humanity failed, Christ succeeded. He is the true Son of Man who fulfills Psalm 8. And now, in Christ, our dignity is restored. It is not restored in its fullness but we still have a renewed dignity.

Friends, one day, when Christ returns, those who belong to Him will reign with Him over a renewed creation. For now, we are called to live as a faithful steward of God’s world under the rule of King Jesus.

III. The Incarnation of Christ is the Pinnacle of God’s Glory (v. 9)

Verse 9 is the repetition of the theme of v. 1:

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

The repetition of the refrain in v. 1 is intended to drive home point of the importance of visible majesty of God. As the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 2:5-11,

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Friends, when we meditate on Psalm 8 we learn that Jesus is the visible manifestation of the glory of God, as I just read in Philippians 2. The pinnacle of God’s glory is seen in the cross of Christ and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the true man of Psalm 8.

This Psalm helps us behold the incarnation of our Savior as He came into the world and took the position lower than the heavenly beings that He has created. He came to save us from our willful ignorance and disobedience to God. He came to fulfill Psalm 8 because we couldn’t and wouldn’t.

That is why the author of Hebrews uses Psalm 8 to help us behold our Savior. He applies it to Jesus, saying that He was made a little lower than the angels in order to die in our place and for our sins on the cross. As a result, the Father has “*crowned him with glory and honor and put all things under His feet*” so now we can sing to Jesus, “*O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.*”

Let me close by saying that Psalm 8 is high cosmology, anthropology, and Christology. This Psalm is so theologically rich and dense that a book could be written about it. Yet, we must remember that this Psalm was not intended to only be believed and applied by theologians and academics.

Think about Psalm 8 this way. Karl Barth, was one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century. Many evangelicals disagree with Barth at various points but he was still a larger than life theologian in the 20th century. His thirteen volume *Church Dogmatics* is still one of the longest systematic theologies ever written.

Barth lived and served the church in Germany and was one of the leading figures who opposed Nazi's. Eventually, Hitler had him kicked out of Germany. He moved to Switzerland and served there for many years.

In the early 1960s, Barth made his only trip to the US. At one of his stops at the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel, he took part in a panel discussion. During the panel discussion a young man stood up and asked the great theologian to summarize his life's work in just a few words. The audience gasped at the question, but Barth only paused for a second. He said, "*Yes. In the words of a song my mother taught me when I was a child: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'*"

For all of Barth's theological knowledge and sophisticated writings, it was the words of a children's song that defined his work. He understood that out of the mouths of babies and infants knowing Jesus loves you and you love Him is the greatest confession you can make. It is the power of the gospel that converts and saves sinners. I hope you have learned to make the confession that small children still sing about today.