

Psalm 8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 February 2015

Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] If you have a Bible with you, open up your copy of the Scriptures to Psalm, the book of Psalms, to Psalm 8.

Now if you're using one of those Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs, it's on page 450. You can find it very easily there. But we're in Psalm 8. We have now been in an extended break from our series through the book of Romans.

We stopped at the end of chapter 4 in December for Christmas. And we've been spending a few weeks doing some other things. A couple of weeks now, this is the third week we've been in the Psalms. And we'll get back to Romans pretty quickly.

I've been feeling a little bit of pressure from some of you who go unnamed recently. When you're getting back to the book of Romans, very soon. But this morning, we're still in the book of Psalms. Psalm 8. And so I want to ask you guys, if you're there already, to stand in honor of God's Word as we read together. Psalm 8. To the choir master, according to the Getith.

[1 : 08] A Psalm of David. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes to steal the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place.

What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Let us see and understand now the majesty of your name in your word, we pray.

[2 : 18] In Jesus' name, amen. You guys be seated. Many of you remember the story of the Israelites as they left Egypt in the Exodus.

If you saw the recent movie, big Hollywood movie in the theaters, then don't trust that as a reliable guide to what happened, alright? But trust your Bibles. The Bible tells us that after the Israelites came out of Egypt, they camped for some time out in the wilderness.

And they eventually came to a mountain, which we know as Mount Sinai. And there on that mountain, God would come down and meet with Moses. We're told in the scriptures that there was fire and smoke would descend down, a cloud would descend down upon the mountain and the ground would shake.

And God told the Israelites that they needed to stay away from the mountain. Do not even come and touch the base of the mountain, lest you should die. And God met with Moses there and revealed His word and His will to Moses for the people of Israel.

And yet, we're told in scripture that while Moses was on the top of the mountain meeting with the Lord, receiving from Him His instructions for the people of Israel, Israel was down at the bottom of the mountain making an idol, creating a golden calf.

[3 : 35] And they began to worship idols while God is revealing His will and His ways to Moses on the mountain. And beginning in the Ten Commandments by telling the people not to worship other gods, not to craft any idols.

And yet, there they are making idols. And it's interesting how the story is related to us because they bring their gold and everything that they have to Aaron. And He crafts this idol for them.

And He tells them, Behold, these are your gods, Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. But then in the next breath, He says, Let us hold a feast to the Lord, to Yahweh.

It's a strange sort of series of events because the Israelites were not only continually tempted to craft and create other gods, they were also tempted to create images that they would view and see as an idol devoted to Yahweh, the true God.

Because the temptation that they faced was not merely that they might worship false gods. They constantly faced the temptation of making their god, the true God, more like the gods of the nations around them.

[4 : 44] More like the gods of the Egyptians that had statues and things dedicated to themselves all over the place. Something that they could physically identify with Him. And so here they are at the base of the mountain as God reveals Himself in His glory at the top of the mountain.

Here they are at the bottom of the mountain declaring this idol to be in some way a picture of Yahweh. A revelation of Yahweh in some sort of sense.

They were, in a very real sense, trying to demote God closer to their level. Trying to bring Him down. Trying to make less of God so that He wasn't quite as fearful, quite as frightening.

This was a God whose presence was so overwhelming that they couldn't touch the mountain because He's at the top revealing Himself. That's a frightening God. And so they decided, let's make Him a little bit more like the other gods.

A friendlier God. A safer God. And I think that we face that temptation all the time. I think that we are constantly tempted to conceive of God in our minds as less frightening than He is.

[5 : 56] As less majestic than He actually is. As less holy than He actually is. So that we love the verse in 1 John that tells us God is love.

And yet we don't like to hear that God is a righteous God who feels indignation every day. We love to hear, for God so loved the world.

But we don't like to hear God hates the wicked. And yet those are all quotations taken from His Word giving us a more complete picture of who He is. But we would rather tame Him.

We would rather bring Him down to our own level. And then there's the other temptation that we constantly face in this regard. And that is to exalt ourselves. Because if we can demote God and exalt ourselves, the chasm is not so great.

Perhaps there's no chasm at all. So this week I was reading a story about a church that builds itself as an evangelical church.

[6 : 57] Now I know that's not a word that not everybody's familiar with. But it's built off the word evangel, which means good news or gospel. And so presumably those who are evangelicals, which we would identify ourselves as evangelicals, are those who are committed to the gospel as it's revealed in God's Word.

That's what it means. It means a gospel person and a person committed to the authority of God's Word. That's what it means to be evangelical. And yet I read a story about a church this week that builds itself as an evangelical church.

It's even a part of the name of the church. Evangelical is in the name of the church. And yet the church was making the news because it had recently changed its position and began to affirm the validity of homosexual relationships and homosexual marriage.

And they were interviewing one particular person who had been attending that church. And he said he'd been to a number of churches growing up. But he knew that that was the church for him on the first day because as one of the pastors stood on the platform and led the worship, they began to sing the hymn Amazing Grace.

And when they got to the line that speaks of us being wretches, that saved a wretch like me, they paused the song and began to explain, we don't agree with the song at this point.

[8 : 13] We know that everyone knows this song, but we don't agree with the words of this song because people aren't wretches. God loves us all and he doesn't think of us in that way whatsoever.

And so there you have the attempt to elevate man above the station that we find ourselves in in reality as sinners, fallen people in need of grace and mercy.

And we see these two sides, demoting God, elevating humanity so that the two might meet in the middle and it might not be such a frightening encounter. It might not be an encounter that actually requires anything of us or requires anyone to give any sort of atoning sacrifice.

And yet, the Bible takes another approach altogether. Yes, the Bible recognizes the significance of humanity, the significance of mankind, not only in who we are, but in who we are in relation to our Creator.

Yet, the Bible always begins with God. Man comes in later and is only seen in light of who God is. So the Genesis 1-11 begins by telling us, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. [9:21] You don't get to man until day 6. It begins with God. The Bible is a thoroughly God-centered book. And Psalm 8 is a thoroughly God-centered psalm.

In fact, Psalm 8 is borrowing and reflecting the language of Genesis 1 so that I believe as we read Psalm 8, David, who wrote this psalm, intends for us to recall the account in Genesis 1 and 2 of the creation of the world and the creation of man and woman in God's image.

But he begins, like Moses in the book of Genesis, he begins with God. He says, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

He identifies God by his covenant name. O Lord, you see it in all capital letters. O Yahweh or Jehovah. He calls him by name and then he refers to him as our Lord, lowercase o-r-d, which means our king or our sovereign one, our ruler.

So Yahweh, you are, first of all, exalted ruler. That's who you are. You're sovereign over the world that you've made and the people that belong to you. You are the sovereign one.

[10:34] And you are majestic. How majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens. You know, frequently in the Bible, the name of God and the glory of God are set side by side as almost synonymous terms.

They're almost interchangeable at times. Now, the word here in Psalm 8 for glory is not the most common word for glory found throughout the Old Testament. The word here is a word that means something like your splendor, your radiance, your beauty, whereas the normal word for glory has to do with God's weightiness, the majesty of God.

But they overlap in meaning so much that you can use them almost interchangeably, which is why they translate this word as glory right here. And over and over throughout the Old Testament, we find other terms for the glory of God side by side with references to God's name.

They're not separable things. To talk about God's name is to talk about God's glory. And to proclaim God's glory or make His glory known is to make His name known.

So, for instance, I want you to hold your place in Psalm 8 and turn all the way back to Exodus. Just after the incident of the golden calf, just a couple of chapters later or one chapter later in Exodus chapter 33, Moses, who has come and pleaded on behalf of the people, God, don't wipe them out.

[12:05] I know they deserve it for what they've done, but don't do it. And God shows mercy to them. But Moses has one more request, not this time on the behalf of the people of Israel, but on his own behalf.

And he comes to God and he says, God, Lord, Yahweh, show me Your glory. Exodus 33, verse 18, Moses said, please show me Your glory.

And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name, the Lord. So the name of God here is synonymous with the glory of God.

When Moses says, God, I want to see Your glory, God says, fine, I will pass before you and I will proclaim my name. And David picks up on that in Psalm 8.

How majestic is Your name. You've set Your glory above the heavens. So these are two ways of saying essentially the same thing. God is majestic.

[13:07] He is holy. He is beautiful. He is resplendent with glory. This is who He is. And yet, He's not finished. He has another term to add to the list.

Notice what He says in verse 2. It begins sort of strange. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger.

You have established strength. Now, if any of you are reading from the New International Version this morning, I preach out of the English Standard Version, but if any of you are reading out of the NIV this morning, you'll notice that it says that out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established, or something along those lines, the word praise is inserted instead of strength.

But literally, the word here is strength. But once again, the power of God or the strength of God is to be understood in connection with the glory of God or God's name, the revelation of who He is.

And so we read later on in the Psalms, in Psalm 106, referring to God's delivering the people from Egypt, it says that He saved them for His name's sake that He might make known His mighty

power.

[14:31] Same word. God saved them for the sake of His name or in other words, so that He might make known His power. So the power of God, the name of God, and the glory of God are in Psalm 8 synonymous terms.

They're just piled up to help us to see just how magnificent God is. This is a biblical view of God. God is not conceived of in merely human terms.

God is not to be thought of as like us in most ways. God is other. God is different. God is exalted. He is above us. And all of these terms are piled on top of one another so that we will begin there.

We begin our thinking with the majesty and glory of God. That's where we ought to always start. We should not start with ourselves.

We should not begin with humanity and our place in the universe. We should always, at all times, begin with God. Only after you have a proper, fixed view of who God is from His word can you even begin to understand who you are and who humanity is.

[15:53] That's exactly what David goes on to do here. He proclaims the greatness of God, but then in verse 3 he begins to turn a corner and to see himself, to see mankind in light of this exalted God.

Notice what he says in verse 3. He says, When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?

In light of the vastness of the universe, who are we? I mean, astronomers estimate and they can't really calculate these sorts of things.

They have various sorts of ways of estimating things, but they estimate that there are about 250 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy, in our galaxy, and then in the known universe, in other words, the parts of the universe that we're capable of actually seeing with our most powerful telescopes, they estimate that there are about 100 trillion galaxies.

You can't really conceive of it. You can't wrap your mind around this. I remember when I was in college, we had to do, I was in a science class.

[17:10] It was really not a science class designed to actually challenge anyone. It was the science that people who didn't want anything to do with math or science took when you were in college. And so that's the one, obviously, that I took. I just wanted to come and learn about the Bible, but they made me learn a little bit of science.

And we had to do a project that was really probably a project on the level of a junior high student, but nevertheless, in that class, that's what you do. And it was just me and mostly football players, mostly the class. And so we had to, we had to actually make a scale model of our solar system. Okay? And so, you know, we started with some styrofoam balls, that's what you usually do, but it had to be scale, not only each planet in reference to the sun, but it had to be in scale with the distances.

So we start running the calculations and we can't find anywhere where we can actually use these distances if we're going to use something that we can see to represent Earth. I mean, if we want the distances shrunk down, we have to shrink the Earth down so small that we'd have to use something we can't even see.

So we eventually had to drive, because we're in Waco, we had to drive to Dallas and use the Cowboys stadium parking lot because it was the only place that we could find that was large enough that we could spread out that much without anything else being in the way.

[18:19] I mean, it was just, it's massive. That's just our solar system. And then you consider the number of stars in our galaxy and the number of galaxies in the universe and it's mind-boggling. David did not have access to all the information that we have access to, but you don't really need to know all the statistics.

You don't need to know how many stars are in the universe in order to be astounded by just the sheer size of the world that God has created and our place in it.

David could stand 2,300 years ago, he could stand and look into the night sky and he could see how small man is.

When I look at the heavens, he says, which is really merely the work of your fingers, it's nothing to you. It's nothing. The question that comes to my mind is, what is man that you even think about us or the son of man that you would care for us in any sort of way that you have any kind of concern for

us?

That's how beginning with God makes you think about yourself as a human being. You have to get things in proper relationship.

[19 : 38] But then David begins to balance things out because the Scriptures do teach us that man is significant, that we do matter, that there is purpose for us, and that we matter more than the rest of the physical world around us because we are those who are created in God's image.

And so, David says in verse 5, Yet, despite that, despite our seeming insignificance that pales next to your majesty, yet you have made man a little lower than the heavenly beings.

You have crowned him with glory and honor. That's David's way of describing what it means to be made in the image of God. Human beings are the only creatures to be said to be made in God's image.

And David describes that as being made a little lower than the heavenly beings and being crowned with glory and honor. That's very much what it means to be human.

Now, in your different translations that's going to come out in different ways. Some translations will say we've been made a little bit lower than the angels. Some will actually say you've been made a little bit lower than God and some a little bit lower than the gods because it's not an easy phrase to translate.

[20 : 52] The word that ESV renders as heavenly beings is the word Elohim, which you might have heard before. It's a word that's used frequently in the Old Testament as just a general term for God.

Just a term for God. That's what it means. It's used throughout Genesis 1-1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And so many, many times this word actually refers to God.

God, but it's really a plural word on the ending of it. That little em sound. That's like our S in English or our ES at times. It's how you make a Hebrew noun plural.

You just add I-M, em, on the end of it. And so Elohim is a plural word. And it's used of God most of the time because the writers of Scripture want to indicate God's own, His majesty.

It's called a plural of majesty. It's what it's actually called by grammarians. That's the point of using that term over and over for God. But it's also used to refer to plural gods of the other nations.

[21 : 53] It's really interesting. And I know this is, you guys aren't interested in Hebrew language, but I am, so you have to sit and listen to me for just a second. It's really fascinating because you'll find this plural word Elohim and yet the verbs that are attached to it are singular when it's talking about God Himself.

But then when it's talking about the gods of the nations, we'll see the same word and yet the verbs are plural in their form because God is singular. He's alone. He's the only true God and yet the common everyday term El for God is not quite enough many times for the biblical writers.

So they use this plural of majesty to indicate that He's not just a God. He's not like the gods of the nations. He's the God singularly, alone.

That's who He is. But now David says you've made humanity a little lower than Elohim. And the question is what exactly does David mean by that?

It could mean that we're made a little lower than God but David's exalted vision of who God is and man in light of that exalted vision makes that translation very improbable.

[23 : 01] It does not fit the context very well. It could mean gods like gods of the nations but that doesn't make a whole lot of sense in that David frequently throughout the Psalms denies the existence of those gods.

But there are occasions in the Old Testament where the word Elohim is used just to describe angels heavenly beings messengers sent by God Himself to accomplish things upon the earth.

Which is why translations like the NIV say angels and it's why the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament used the Greek word for angel where we get the word for angel angelos.

That's why it's frequently rendered angel because I think that's the point that David's making.

You've made man here you're exalted and above and creation is way down here but in the order of creation we're just right under these powerful heavenly beings.

Within the context of creation human beings are significant. In fact he says we have been crowned with glory and honor. We exist as human beings to uniquely display the glory and majesty of God before the rest of the world.

[24 : 14] That's why we're here. Yes in a sense the psalmist says the heavens proclaim the glory of God but not like human beings are capable of doing. Uniquely made in God's image.

Uniquely capable of reflecting His glory to the rest of creation. We are in that sense crowned with glory and honor and that takes shape in practical everyday life because he goes on to describe what does that look like?

What does the crowning of human beings with glory and honor look like? It looks like this. You have given Him dominion over the works of your hands. You've put all things under His feet. And then he goes on to describe sheep, oxen, birds, fish, whatever's in the sea.

All those things you have put under the dominion of man. Which means we are far more significant than any other creature in the world.

We matter more than endangered fish in a stream if we need to drink the water. We matter more. We just do. In fact, I think this business of man exercising dominion over the world in light of being created in the image of God is what gives to us a right, good, biblical understanding of the relationship between human beings and our accountability, our stewardship over the physical world. [25 : 44] Because we have been given dominion which means we have responsibility. God does not intend for us to just destroy the world that we live in. That's not what he intended when he told Adam and Eve that they were to have dominion over the earth.

That's not all. They were to work the garden. They were to take care of it and to keep it. Yes, so that it would produce fruit for their benefit because they are in dominion. They're the masters. But not in a destructive way. I think we might be able to call this Christ-centered conservation if we were to think in those terms.

That there is a kind of biblical environmental that means that we don't just destroy and wreak havoc in the world. But it's Christ-centered. We never elevate that above Christ or above human beings made in his image.

So that, yeah, we want to take care of the world. We want to care for it. We don't want to just pour oil cans out in the front yard or whatever people do. We don't want to do that sort of stuff. But what we don't want to do is elevate the creation above man.

[26 : 49] We want to be balanced in these sorts of things. We've been given dominion and that implies responsibility. And yet, even in that, we are given dominion over the works of God's hands.

That's the emphasis here. This majestic God, who carved out the heavens with his fingers, who speaks all things into existence by the power of his word, he has given dominion to us, lowly human beings.

That's significant. It doesn't mean that he relinquishes control. We read throughout the Psalms how God causes the rain. God makes the grass to grow.

God is the one who brings a drought. God is in control of nature. If God wants a plant to produce fruit, he makes it produce fruit. If he doesn't, then he keeps it from producing fruit.

God still remains absolutely sovereign over the world, and yet we have responsibility in the midst of that. It's a lesson for us, I think, on the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

[27 : 51] He can maintain absolute control over the physical world so that he can say, I made those vegetables grow in your garden. And yet we at the same time can be responsible to water them, fertilize them, and take care of them.

God's sovereignty and human responsibility, not at odds with one another, not at odds with one another here in our care of the creation and his sovereignty over it, not at odds with one another in the matter of salvation or anything else.

He's sovereign and we're responsible. And that comes with incredibly practical things as you begin to think through them. I mean, it affects the way that you just think about your work in the world. Because it's not just about the natural world. Being given dominion over the earth is not simply about being a good gardener or anything like that. It's about more than that. It affects everything that you do.

Your job, whether you go off to work or whether you stay home with kids or you're retired, whatever it is that occupies your time in the middle of the day is the means by which you exercise dominion over the earth.

[28 : 56] That's how you participate in this. So that everything you do needs to be seen in the light of, am I faithfully reflecting the glory of God in the ways in which I exercise dominion?

It's simple. Is God glorified in the way that you fold laundry? It seems like a silly question, but the Apostle Paul says whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do everything to the glory of God.

And how you interact with your co-workers, how you fill out a spreadsheet, all of that, everything that you do, can either be done in a way that brings honor and glory to God, or it can be done in a way that doesn't.

And it doesn't necessarily change the externals of things. It's matter of the heart. Why are you there? Why are you doing that? Are you grumbling within, or are you frustrated? You just can't wait to stop doing whatever it is you're doing?

But what it is you're doing is the means by which God has given you to obey His command to exercise dominion. Work is not something to be constantly run away from and escaped from.

[30 : 08] Work is a way that we can glorify God in the world. This is practical. This is real. This is real stuff. And yet, the problem is that you and I know full well that we are not good stewards.

That we don't exercise dominion in a good way. We don't. And you don't just have to look at large instances of that. You don't just have to look for, for instance, environmental issues where places the earth has been devastated by our activity.

You don't have to look for that. You can just look in your own heart, in your own life, and you can see multiple places where you have not been a good steward of the responsibilities that God has given you. And that's true because we're sinners.

Because we are fallen people. Remember, all of the language of Psalm 8 is reflecting Genesis chapter 1. When he says, what is man that you are mindful of him, the word is Adam, Adam, man. And Adam fell. Adam sinned. And when Adam sinned, God cast him out of the garden. God cursed the ground so that Adam's work, his means of exercising dominion, became frustrating and difficult.

[31 : 22] That's a part of the curse. Adam took with him out of the garden a new sinful nature, and he passed it on to his children and grandchildren. And you and I come into this world, the Apostle Paul tells us, as children of wrath.

That is, we come into this world already fallen, already sinful. And so when we look over the landscape of our own personal lives, we see failure in regards to our stewardship of the responsibility of exercising dominion to the glory of God.

We have failed and we continue to fail. That's a fact. And yet, there's another man. There is another Adam who came to exercise dominion, but he didn't wear a crown of glory, he wore a crown of thorns.

There's another Adam who comes to redeem us from all of our failures. leaders. And the New Testament writers would have us to know that when David says, you have made man a little lower than the heavenly beings, they would have us to know that Jesus, exalted throughout all eternity past, true God of true God, took on flesh and for a while made lower than the heavenly beings, just like us.

We read about that in Hebrews chapter 2 where we are told in verse 6 that it has been testified somewhere, what is man that you're mindful of him, sound familiar?

[33 : 11] Or the son of man that you care for him, for you made him a little lower than the angels, you've crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet. And then the writer of Hebrews begins to comment on Psalm 8.

Now, he says, in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside of his control. And then he acknowledges though, but at present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But what do we see in this fallen world? 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.

He tasted death for us. He took our place. He bore the brunt of the curse for us. Why? We're still living in a world where we don't see everything in subjection to him.

So what did he accomplish accomplish in his death? If he didn't immediately take away the effects of the fall, what has he done? What has he done?

[34 : 28] Verse 10, it was fitting that he for whom and by whom all things exist in bringing many sons of glory should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. What did he accomplish?

He accomplished the bringing of many sons to glory. glory. So that while we live in a fallen world and while we fail to exercise the kind of stewardship that we ought to exercise over the world, in daily tasks, in big global tasks, although we have failed in all of those ways, everyone who can be called a son, everyone who has trusted in him, he is bringing to glory.

There is going to be a new heavens and new earth. There will be no more sin. There will be no more death. The world will no longer be in rebellion.

And Paul tells us in Romans 8 that all of creation is waiting for the redeeming, for the revealing of the sons of glory. The entire universe is waiting for Jesus on that day to finally fully redeem and restore his people.

There is hope in the midst of all of your mess-ups because there is glory to come. There is a reason to continue to try to exercise good stewardship. There is a reason in this life to aim at the glory of God as much as you can because there is coming great glory in the future for those who belong to the one who suffered in our place.

[36 : 05] He is bringing many sons to glory, but you will not be brought to glory if you are not a son. In man or woman or child, you become a son.

You become an heir to all that Jesus has earned simply by trusting in him. So I urge you this morning, trust in him.

All the frustrations that are in this world will one day be erased. everything that goes wrong on this earth will one day be made right. And in that day, the only thing that will matter will do you get to participate in that new world or do you have to suffer for your own sins and failures forever?

Are you a son or a cast off? Faith in Jesus makes a difference. Let's pray.

Let's pray.