6-7-20, The Holy Way

Sermon on Psalm 8

1. Introduction
2. The nature of the Psalms
3. This is a psalm of praise to God.
4. Prayer
5. The text
6. The heading—This is part of the original psalm
7. To the Leader [Some translations say “To the Music Director”]
8. According to the Gittith
9. An instrument of some kind?
10. Some particular melody?
11. Some specific festival when this psalm is sung or chanted?
12. A Psalm of David— “of” is a particular Hebrew letter that is often used as a prefix to a word. In this case it can mean by, to, for, in the style of, or a few other things. This Psalm may have been written by David. It may have been written years or even centuries after David’s death.
13. (v. 1&2) **Praise to God** O Lord, our Sovereign [Some translations say “Governor”; the word carries the meaning of one who has authority over us.], how majestic is your name in all the earth!
14. (v. 1b) You have set your glory above the heavens.
15. (v. 2) Out of the mouths of babes and infants [the most fragile and vulnerable] you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger [the most dangerous].
16. (v. 3&4) **Humans’ sense of insignificance** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you have established, what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals, that you care for them? [This is another of those couplets.]
17. (v. 5—8) **What God has done**
18. (v. 5) Yet you have made them [humans] a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. [All glory and honor come from God, and only God is entitled to them. That God grants them to us in eternal life is a pure gift of God’s grace.]
19. (v. 6a) You have given them dominion over the works of your hands
20. (v. 6b—8) You have put all things under their feet [to steward and nurture, not to waste]
21. (v. 7a) All sheep and oxen
22. (v. 7b) And also the beasts of the field
23. (v. 8a) The birds of the air and the fish of the sea
24. (v. 8b) Whatever passes along the paths of the sea [a great mystery of the time]
25. (v. 9) O, Lord, our sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! [This is called an *inclusio*, and it brings us back to the beginning.]
26. What does this Psalm mean for us today?

Often when I officiate at a funeral or memorial service, I begin by thanking those who are present. Then I lay out our responsibilities at a memorial or funeral. Our first and highest priority is to honor and glorify God. After that are the responsibilities of comforting one another in our grief and faithfully memorializing the person who has died.

As we go through life, as individuals and as a church, we have a number of priorities. But the first and highest is to glorify and honor God. And when should we do that? In worship?

Certainly, we are to glorify and honor God in our worship, but that’s only a small part of it. Every moment of our waking life is a moment to honor God. The way we do our work, the way we interact with our neighbors and friends and family, the way we meet the strangers we encounter, each of these is an opportunity to honor and glorify God.

One of the things we should remember is that we are walking billboards about God. Anyone who knows that we are Jesus-followers can look at us and our lives and our choices and our decisions and they can reach a conclusion about how all believers are. I don’t know if that’s a scary thought for you, but it probably should be.

When I was in police work, I was aware of the fact that the way I drove, the way I acted, and the way I treated people reflected, positively or negatively, on every body who worked for the Douglas Police Department or the Pima County Attorney’s Office or the Tucson Police Department. But it also reflected on every man or woman who wears a badge and serves the public.

In the same way, when we make it known, by wearing a cross or putting a fish outline (technically it’s called an ichtus, and it’s a quite old symbol of the church) on our car or by talking about our faith, we are saying in effect, “Take a look at me and you’ll know everything you need to know about Christians.” I’m not trying to get you to hide your faith. Far from it. What I am hoping to do is to help you to see that, if you claim Christian faith and then engage in sexist or racist or other demeaning behavior, you paint all of us with the same ugly brush.

But there’s another side to that story. For all who know that you follow Jesus, every time you show kindness and mercy, every time you practice humility and generosity, every time you are humble and gracious and loving, you are painting the rest of us with that beautiful brush. And more than that, you are glorifying God, who deserves all the honor and glory.

Another aspect of this Psalm which can inform our lives is the proclamation of who God is and who we are and what God does. The Psalm says that God’s name is majestic, not just in some places but in all the earth! God has created all the beauty in the world. God has created the exquisite beauty of the night sky, the way a newborn calf gets its legs under it and goes to drink milk from its mother, the glory of cactus blooms, the wonder of wildflowers, and the magic of life-giving rain. God is both the Creator and Sustainer of all life. And the Psalmist, whether David or someone later, remarks with a sense of real wonder that God has chosen to place us humans just a little lower than God.

God has also placed us, and that’s all of us, in a position of stewardship over all of creation. We have an affirmative responsibility to protect and to nurture the earth and all that resides in it. And that looks different to different people. There is space in the Kingdom of God for hunters and non-hunters. Hunters need to do so responsibly, and in a way that preserves and strengthens animal populations, rather than destroying them. Those who choose not to hunt, and it’s been a couple of decades since I have, need to think about our own choices, and whether those choices are to the benefit or the detriment of the planet.

I’ve only talked about a couple of examples, but the world is filled with ways you can make a positive difference. Will you find out what you can do? And will you do it?

The most incredible miracle we will ever experience is the fact that God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, has chosen to love us, to love you, to love me, and to invite us into a relationship that will last throughout all eternity. May we truly and fully glorify God’s name, and may we live lives that will be so lovely and so gracious that others will want what we have. May it be so. Amen