



Psalm 8

Sermon – Tony Swinton

11 July 2021

Heavenly Father, as we consider Psalm 8 today, I ask that you calm our hearts and minds and that your Holy Spirit gives us insight into your majesty and love for us. Amen

Psalm 8 is said to be a psalm written by King David as are the psalms around it.

Oddly I want to start our journey into Ps 8 by reading the first verse of a few of the psalms around it...try to pick up on the emotion of these verses as I read (Ps 3-7 + Ps 10-12).

Ps 8 is a psalm of praise to God but it sits in the middle of psalms of lament. Why? Well, I think it fits there because it is also a psalm of yearning... I think the Psalmist is looking back and yearning for the way God made things to be. The psalm becomes a prophecy about Jesus, God become man. And so, this psalm tends to look forward as it looks back.

It starts and ends the same way –

‘Oh LORD, our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!’

The dictionary I looked at said, to be majestic was thought of as very beautiful, dignified, or impressive. They stand out.

As we look at the psalm as I hope you will see that God stands out and find a sense of his majesty...

V2 from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

God has chosen little ones to praise him...so that the children's praise will silence his enemies. How does that work...?

Think of some of the great stories of the OT that would have been known by the Psalmist's community and their kids...

Do you remember a youngster named David (later to write this psalm), dressed in the equivalent of t-shirt and shorts, going up against the Philistines greatest warrior - 9-foot-tall Goliath dressed in full battle gear... Goliath lost! Listen to what David said before he went up against Goliath, 1 Samuel 17:37:

'The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine'.

What about Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers but God uses this evil event to save his people...as Joseph himself said to his brothers years later, 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'

These are God's victories! Who stands out here? The Lord does!

What about the way God rescued the people of Israel from increasingly oppressive slavery in Egypt? The Jews still remember The Passover every year.

Moses is told by God to tell Pharaoh to release the people of Israel from slavery. The then Pharaoh refuses. God sends 10 plagues on Egypt until the Pharaoh relents. Now the first 9 plagues are systematic confrontations with 9 of the Egyptian gods.

For example, the Egyptians had a god of healing, Isis... Yahweh sent boils on all the people. Who can take control of health? The Lord can! What can Isis do to stop God? Nothing!

The last and most terrible of the plagues was the death of the first-born. With the death of the first-born God does to Pharaoh and Egypt what they did to his people about 80 or so years before, the genocide of Israel's new born boys... Yet unlike Pharaoh's murders, God's judgement on the Egyptians could be said to come with his grace. If the Egyptians, like the Israelites, painted animal blood over the door posts their first-born would have been saved also, for the angel of death was to pass over all the houses with blood over their doorposts.

How outstanding is that...

‘Oh LORD our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!’

Can you imagine the Jewish kids talking about these ways God had saved his people against seemingly impossible odds?

I am left imagining a random nation around Israel... 'Let's go invade Israel... Are you mad didn't you hear what God does when you oppose his people and his plans for them? Even their kids go around telling those stories and praising God.'

V2 from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

Jesus quotes v2... Let me read you Matthew 21:12-16...

V3-4 When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in their place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

I can recall being on holidays in the Kimberleys. There were no clouds, no moon and no city pollution. As the sun set we were blanketed by this quilt of stars... I just sat there in awe. Our conversation went to our creator God; how could it not? In the quieter moments on that night a sense of my own insignificance occupied me.

We were pondering God's heavens, *the works of his fingers, the moon and the stars which he has set in their place...and V1b tells us* our God in all his glory stands behind and above the heavens.

'Oh LORD our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!'

Given the heavens God has created the Psalmist asks... *V4 What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?*

V5-8 provides an answer, but before we go there let's stop and consider for a moment some of what our culture says about who mankind is.

In the culture we live in I have often heard that we are animals... Some in our culture would say that animals should have the same rights people have. I've heard tell on a number of occasions that we are genetically very close to apes. The inference being we are fundamentally the same...both animals.

I have had the privilege, in a jungle somewhere in the Congo, to hang out with a family of gorillas. I sat here...the silverback sat there... The silverback was pulling out the bamboo and eating the roots...and I sat there pretending to do the same, apparently that's the wise thing to do when you hang out with a silverback gorilla.

On reflection it seems to me, that apart from our opposable thumb and a similar sort of body shape, we didn't really have a lot in common.

Genesis 1 tells us people are to rule over the animals. In Genesis 9 God tells Noah they can eat the animals. It would seem clear animals are not the same as people in God's eyes.

I've also heard it said that we are just biological machines. I have a relative who took this stance. I discovered a little poem and I eventually got a chance to share it with him; it went like

this... *When all is said and done, we are only machines* (my relative gave a self-satisfied grin, I read on) *so I tied her to my bedroom wall for future use, and she cried* (my relative's face dropped and his body actually shook). It seemed he did not really believe we were mere machines.

We are not animals, nor are we biological machines...so back to the Psalmist's question V 4 ***What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?***

The Psalmist answers his own question in V5-8...

...women and men **made by God**, a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned by God with glory and honour. Genesis 1:27-28 tells us we are made in God's image. Genesis 2:7 tells us God formed us from the dust of the earth. The Apostle Paul in Romans 9:21 uses the imagery of a potter and his pots (God being the potter and us the pots); so God takes the dust, makes the pots (us) in his image and chooses to crown us with glory and honour, making us to rule over the works of his hands.

‘Oh LORD our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!’

Friends there are challenges here for us...

For example, we need to remember the poor; they are made in God's image; share the resources you have with those in need.

Today is the last day of NAIDOC Week. Until the 1967 federal referendum Aboriginal peoples were not counted in the

Australian census...so they were effectively non-people... Yet they were and are made in the image of God, just a little lower than the heavenly beings, crowned by God with glory and honour.

Consider other challenges that come from our secular culture... What about abortion / termination of the unwanted (ABC news reported 65,000 terminations in Australia in 2017)... Genocide of the 'inferior' or the 'enemy' (a low estimate from last century - 14 million). What about the push that may come to euthanise the bed ridden as they contribute little to nothing and are a financial burden...? It will be in the mind of some and the politics of the day may bring it to light. Remember the gas chambers.

Something has gone wrong... sin entered the world (read Genesis 2 and 3). The image of God in people is there, but the mirror is cracked. The Psalmist knew it and we also get to see it.

As the Psalmist looks back to how God made things to be and to the great things God has done, Ps 8 ***looks forward***...to another son of man...Jesus. Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man...

Mark 2:10 'But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...'

Mark 10:45 'For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'.

Come to Hebrews Ch 2 with me... The writer of Hebrews is talking about Jesus Ch 2:6-9...

Our sin has cracked the image of God in us and bought us death... Jesus, God become man, Jesus the Son of Man brings redemption and a fresh start for us. In Jesus the image is restored. So for us, those for whom Christ died, we are crowned once again with glory and honour.

So, what about those of us in Christ when our life seems like the Psalmist's and our hearts and minds lament...

Remember Romans 8, Paul writes:

...we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From dust to conquerors through him who loved us...

V9 'Oh LORD our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!