



Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber,

29 September 2024

“The Psalm on the Moon”

Readings: Psalm 8, Hebrews 2:6-9, Matthew 21:14-16 (8am)

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**Introduction/Kids' Spot** (with lots of photos)

Who's ever been outside at night and looked up at the moon and the stars? There was a super-moon last week, but it's always an impressive sight.

It was 55 years ago that Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. It was a big job to get there, flying through space for 4 days, travelling 380,000km plus orbits of the earth and the moon. The Lunar Module descended to the moon and then Neil Armstrong took his 'one small step.'

It was a huge undertaking back in 1969 - with less computer power to manage it all than you have on the phone in your pocket - to get people to the moon, land them on the moon and then get them safely back again.

It was an incredible achievement and many of us remember where we were when Neil Armstrong took his one small step. I was 7 years old and there was no TV reception where we lived so we stood in the school quadrangle and listened to it over the radio through the dodgy school PA system!

On the 4 day return flight, they looked back at the moon and took what has become a well-known and much used photo of the moon and during a television broadcast the evening before splashdown, Buzz Aldrin said, 'I've been reflecting on the events of the past several days. A verse from the Psalms comes to mind:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place;

What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?'

He was reading from Psalm 8 (*though he used the KJV not the NIV that I quoted*).

The wonder of the trip to the moon made him focus on God who made the moon, who created the heavens and the earth and we are going to read that Psalm now.

**Introduction**

While part of Psalm 8 was quoted by Buzz Aldrin on the return journey, but did you know that Psalm 8 is also on the moon? It went up on Apollo 11 on a small thin silicon disc that had messages from some 70 world leaders. They were tiny and needed a microscope to read. And it included a message from the Pope. His message was basically Psalm 8 and a one-line prayer. And that disc is still there – on the moon in a simple cloth pouch in an aluminium case attached to the base of the landing module which remained on the moon when the landing module returned to the orbiting Saturn V Rocket.

So let's pray as we consider this **Psalm on the Moon**.

**Prayer**

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

As we consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...

...speak to us through your Word, by your Holy Spirit, and through the wonder of your creation as we look at this Psalm on the moon.

In the name of Jesus. Amen

**1. The Glory and Majesty of God v1, 9**

What do you see when you consider the heavens? It's not hard to image David, out with sheep overnight, looking up at the moon and the stars and composing this Psalm. And the first thing he sees, the first thing this psalm takes us to is the **Glory and Majesty of God**.

In fact that's the wrapping of the Psalm - it's beginning and ending - the first two lines and the last two lines are the same:

8:1a, 9      **O LORD, our Lord,  
                  how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

Creation points us to the Creator, to his majesty and glory. As we read in Romans 1: What may be known about God is plain because God has made it plain. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made. (Romans 1:19-20)

And whether it is a shepherd in 1000BC, called David, composing a Psalm, or a physicist in the 1600s, called Blaise Pascal, recognising that, *'There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of everyone which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus'*; or a microbiologist in the 1800s called Louis Pasteur who said that the more he studied nature, the more amazed he was at the Creator; we agree that the wonders of creation point to the glory of the Creator.

And the three astronauts in 1968 aboard Apollo 8, in the year prior to the moon landing, recognised it too, as they, in the most watched TV broadcast to that point in history said, 'We are now approaching lunar sunrise, and for all the people back on Earth, the crew of Apollo 8 has a message that we would like to send to you. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,"' and they read on through the opening verses of Genesis 1.

And similarly with Buzz Aldrin returning to earth and recalling Psalm 8, well may we say:

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

You have set your glory in the heavens.

When we consider the heavens we see the glory and majesty of God and we also see **the insignificance of humanity**.

**2. The Insignificance of Humanity** v4

8:3 **When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers ...**

8:4 **What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?**

After returning to earth, Neil Armstrong talked about looking at Earth from space: 'It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. ... I felt very, very small.'

It's one thing to look up at the moon and wonder 'what is mankind?' It's quite another to orbit the moon and see the earthrise like the crew of Apollo 8 - the first mission to orbit the moon; and quite another to walk on that moon like Armstrong and Aldrin and look back at the earth and wonder 'is God mindful of us?'

Although people have gone no further than the moon, unmanned spacecraft have. In 1990, Voyager 1, having 'explored' Jupiter and Saturn was on the fringes of the solar system, 6.4 billion km away, when engineers turned it around for one last look at its home planet, and it took [this picture - this portrait of our world - The Pale Blue Dot](#). Caught in the centre of scattered light rays, Earth appears as a tiny point of light. Carl Sagan, the astronomer who request the shot be taken said, 'Look at that Pale Blue Dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives ... every king and peasant, ... every mother and father, ... in the history of our species lived there - on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.'

Well might we say with the Psalmist,

'What is mankind that you are mindful of us?'

When we look up, we know the white glow we call the Milky Way is caused by stars we can't even distinguish. It's part of the galaxy that we are in. A galaxy with a guesstimated 100 billion stars taking 100,000 years for light to travel across. And our galaxy is just one of who knows how many galaxies.

To quote from 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' by Douglas Adams:

'Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-two million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue green planet whose ... life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think [iPhones] are a pretty neat idea.'

To quote David:

'When I consider your heavens,  
the work of your fingers ...

What is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?

**3. The Glory and Honour of Humanity** v5-8

But yet, as David goes on, we see God is mindful of us, God cares for us. In fact, despite our insignificance in the universe, David highlights the **Glory and Honour of Humanity**.

- 8:5           **You have made them a little lower than the angels  
                  and crowned them with glory and honour.**
- 8:6           **You made them ruler over the works of your hands;  
                  you put everything under their feet:**
- 8:7-8         **all [*animals, birds, fish...*]**

And we hear the echoes of Genesis 1:26 when God said,

‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,  
so that they may rule over the animals, birds, fish...’

Humankind - the very pinnacle of creation - crowned him with glory and honour.

And do we not see something of that glory and honour in our ability to get to the moon? Some 400,000 people worked on that project over the seven (7) year period from President Kennedy’s grand statement. The intellectual ability to come up with the maths, the science and respond and adapt to unexpected twists and turns. We see the creativity of those made in the image of their Creator.

But there’s a problem isn’t there? The writer to the Hebrews in the New Testament reflects on this OT Psalm, so let’s hear what he says.

**Bible Reading:** Hebrews 2:6-9

**4. The Inability of Humanity** Hebrews 2:6-8

Did you hear the problem? The writer notes that the psalmist says that God has placed everything under humanity’s feet, and observes that,

‘In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.’

The glory and honour we were created to have seems somehow to be missing, there is an **inability** for the task of ruling over creation and of living for God.

Although God’s eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen in creation, as we read in Romans 1, although the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), what else do we see in Romans 1?

‘For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images of animals. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.’  
(Romans 1:21-25)

And over the page, Romans 3:23,

‘For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’

From the fall of Adam & Eve on, humanity has failed to recognise the glory and majesty of God, and failed to live with the glory and honour we were created to have, and so ‘we do not see everything subject to them.’

In fact, reading on in Romans 1 –

‘They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice ... They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.’ (Romans 1:29-31)

Carl Sagan (the pale blue dot astronomer) says –

‘The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals & emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner. How frequent their misunderstandings; how eager they are to kill one another; how fervent their hatreds.’

Carl Sagan, who is not a Christian, goes on -

‘Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.’

But thankfully he is wrong!

## 5. **The Glory and Honour of Jesus** Hebrews 2:9

As the writer to the Hebrews says,

‘We do not see everything subject to humanity. But we see **Jesus!**’ (Hebrews 2:8-9)

The sense of wonder that David expresses indicates God’s intention for humanity has not been forgotten and the writer to the Hebrews shows that he understood Psalm 8 as a prophecy to be fulfilled.

This promise of subjection, of everything under his feet, doesn’t apply to humanity in general, but to Jesus in particular.

‘We do not see everything subject to humanity. But we see Jesus who was made lower than the angels for a little while.’ *He became human, born in a stable and is ‘now crowned with glory and honour.’* (Hebrews 2:8-9)

Jesus is now exalted to, and seated at, the right hand of God (see also Hebrews 1:3) because he was made lower, in fact so low that he dies.

‘We do see Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death.’ (Hebrews 2:9)

It’s the same as the song the angelic beings sing in Revelation 5:9, 12 –

‘You are worthy ... because you were slain. ... Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!’

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, just a week before his death, the children shout out,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David.’ (Matt 21:15)

The leaders are indignant, but Jesus quotes Psalm 8:2

‘From the lips of children and infants  
you, Lord, have called forth your praise.’ (Matt 21:16)

The praise due to the LORD in Psalm 8, is due to Jesus, because he is both God and the truly human one and now crowned with glory and honour.

**6. The Glory and Honour of Humanity** Hebrews 2:9-10

The purpose of his sharing the human condition and of suffering death was (Hebrews 2:9) was so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

That is, Jesus dies our death, he dies in our place for our sin, taking the punishment we deserve so that we may live forever with him. And as the very next verse says, it was so Jesus could 'bring many sons and daughters to glory.' (Hebrews 2:10) That is, to have the **glory and honour** of Psalm 8:5, that since Adam & Eve, we have fallen short of, to have that glory restored as we respond in repentance and faith.

As Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica:

'God called you to [the sanctifying work of the Spirit] through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

And that begins now, as Paul writes to the Corinthians:

'We are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.' (2 Corinthians 3:18)

And we look forward to (as Paul writes to the church in Rome) the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18) when Jesus returns and that time when we are with the Lord in the heavenly city which does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. (Revelation 21:23)

**Conclusion**

On this day that we considered the heavens, and as we have spoken of the achievement of humankind in getting to the moon and back, how much more should we look to the Maker of the moon? How much more should we declare the glory and majesty of God? How much more should we give thanks that God is mindful of us, that he cares for us, that he loves us and that he displayed that most fully in entering his creation in Jesus who suffered death, so that by the grace of God he would bring many sons and daughters to glory.

Amen

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**Note:**

*For the Pale Blue Dot, see the 15 minute mark of Louie Giglio's video, '[Indescribable](#).'*  
*Watch the whole thing for more on the grandeur of creation and the wonder of the Creator.*  
*See also his video, '[How Great is our God](#).'*