

GOD'S GLORY IN THE PINNACLE OF HIS CREATION
PSALM 8

How has your week been? Do you ever have weeks or days when you stop reading the news alerts on your phone and email because it just is too distressing for your spiritual heart? I have some **good news** for you:

- ✓ Worldwide, there are [310 million major surgeries](#) are performed each year (around 40 to 50 million in USA). It is estimated that there is a 96-99% survival rate of those surgeries.
- ✓ A few weeks ago the Gribben family of Northern Ireland took their daughter, Rachel who suffered from severe epileptic seizures that were causing developmental delays to the St. Nicholas Children's Hospital for surgery from American neurological specialist, [Dr. Luke Tomich](#). And he successfully found and removed the abnormal tissue that was causing the seizures. What is remarkable is that the surgery was done by Dr. Tomich in L'viv, Ukraine, which of course is in a war with Russia.
- ✓ Last November, one of NASA's most famous craft, [Voyager 1](#), stopped transmitting messages to the great anxiety of those responsible for receiving them. Voyager 1 left earth 46 years and 7 months ago, and sailed past Pluto and out of our solar system almost 12 years ago. Scientists were able to adjust codes on the chips of Voyager 1 so that on April 18 Voyager 1 began transmitting again. This repair was done from 15 billion miles away!
- ✓ This week 19-year-old [Lloyd Martin](#) completed the London Marathon. While that's noteworthy, it's not unusual (nor was his time). But he became the youngest person with Down Syndrome to ever finish that race.
- ✓ Three men in Micronesia were on a 100-mile trip in their 20-foot boat when it failed and they were stranded on an unpopulated island. [They were rescued](#) after the US Coast Guard spotted their message "HELP" spelled out with palm tree leaves on the beach.
- ✓ A couple of weeks ago astronauts on the International Space Station did what you and I did: they watched the full [solar eclipse](#) — and took pictures, from space. Pretty fascinating.
- ✓ A collection of [13 paintings](#) of Mary that are 350-400 years old and were damaged in the fire of Notre Dame in 2019 have now been restored and are set to go back on display.

Don't you like good news? Doesn't it encourage your heart and help you think rightly about this world. For a few weeks, we are going to look at some of the songs of Scripture that are given to help us **be steadfast** in our shaky world. This morning we are going to look at the first song of praise in the Psalms — Psalm 8. In this psalm we will be reminded of the privilege and importance of praising God in this world —

ALWAYS BE READY TO PRAISE AND REJOICE IN THE LORD — EVEN IN (DESPITE) THE CHAOS OF THE WORLD.

The psalmist David gives us **four reasons to sing a song of joy in this world**:

1. **Worship the Lord for His [INHERENT GREATNESS](#) (vv. 1-2)**
2. **Worship the Lord for His [GREAT CREATION](#) and [COMPASSION](#) (vv. 3-4)**
3. **Worship the Lord for His [GREAT GRACE](#) (vv. 5-8)**
4. **Worship the Lord for His [INHERENT GREATNESS](#) (vv. 1-2)**

Context:

- ✓ As we noted last week, **Psalm 1** establishes a theme for Psalms of the sufficiency of Scripture.
- ✓ **Psalm 2** similarly deals with the theme of the sovereignty of God against the world's rebellion; it introduces us to the main character of the Psalms — God is the King.
- ✓ **Psalms 3-7** are familiar songs — they are songs of lament, and the themes are similar to today:
 - There are adversaries, enemies, and persecution (**3:1-2, 6**; 4:2; 5:8; 6:6-9; 7:1-2, 6, 9)
 - There is distress (**4:1**) and sorrows in the night (4:4; 5:3)
 - There is suffering and the apparent lack of goodness (4:6)
 - We have anguish, groaning, and inability (need for help) (**5:1-2**; 6:2-3, 6)
 - We know the struggle to endure because of the length of troubles (6:3, 6)
 - There is wickedness and rebellion against God (5:4-6; **5:9-10**)
 - There is even discipline and correction from the Lord (**6:1**)
- ✓ The superscription of Psalm 8 (which is not part of Scripture, but from reliable editors) indicates it was to be sung with *the Gittith* — likely a kind of stringed instrument, like a hand-held harp that gave a “joyous sound.” Only two other psalms have this inscription (Pss. 81, 84) and they also are joyful expressions of praise and delight in God (e.g., **84:10-12**).
- ✓ **Psalm 8**, then, is a call to praise the Lord (the first one). After (or in) a season of lament, it teaches us how to praise — to have a song of joy. This psalm focuses on worship of God for His role in creation — but without worshipping the creation itself. Creation points and leads us to worship the Creator.
- ✓ While written by King David, this is a song everyone can (should) sing. The principles are universal.

ALWAYS BE READY TO PRAISE AND REJOICE IN THE LORD — EVEN IN (DESPITE) THE CHAOS OF THE WORLD.

1. Worship the Lord for His **INHERENT GREATNESS** (vv. 1-2)

- While the psalmist is an individual — he begins (and ends) the psalm with a corporate declaration —
 - ✓ **O LORD, our Lord** is O YHWH, our Lord — this covenant-making and keeping God is also the Master of Israel. It is more than just a statement of reality; it is a declaration of allegiance. David as the king and the people as a nation *want* God to be their sovereign master.
 - ✓ This simple declaration sets the tone for the whole psalm and is hope in our lament — God is in covenant with His people and a gracious master of them (He is King, but He is a benevolent King).
- It is also notable what David says about the Lord — **how majestic is Your name in all the earth**.
 - ✓ Something that is **majestic** is “wide, high, great, noble.” It is used to refer to His power and authority over creation (Ps. 93:4) and His brilliance and beauty (Ps. 76:4).
 - ✓ To say **His name** is majestic is to say *He* is majestic, great, expansive. His name is His character.
 - ✓ Wherever and whenever God has been revealed, He is shown to be the greatest.
 - ✓ And amplifying that, David says, **[You] have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!**

- ✓ His **splendor** is “the light and glory God wears as King” [BDB]. It is the revelation of His nature.
- ✓ To **display** His splendor is to place His glory on display. He has not hidden Himself from mankind; all men know who He is through their conscience and creation (Rom. 1:20). There is no excuse.
- ✓ There is also a causal relationship between these lines — “How majestic is Your name...*because* You have displayed...” We know He is majestic and can praise Him as majestic because He has shown it.
- ✓ This verse reminds those who are tempted to lament (and even despair) that in the greatest part of creation that we know (**the heavens**), God is above it. Everywhere we look, we see the display of God’s character (Pss. 57:5, 11; 72:19; 148:13). Are we training ourselves to look and worship?
 - **The eclipse** three weeks ago was an opportunity to see the glory of God above the heavens...
 - Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote: “Earth’s crammed with Heaven, and every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit ’round it and pluck blackberries.” We are surrounded by reasons for praising God; are we apathetic or disheartened, untrained so that we do not see what should be obvious?
 - “The world is not lacking in wonders, but in a sense of wonder.” [Chesterton]
- **Just how great and majestic is God?** He answers in v. 2 —
 - ✓ God has allowed the defense of His name to be accomplished through the weakest of His creation — newborn **babes** and toddlers. God does not need powerful people or eloquent debaters to silence His **adversaries** — a simple, childlike cry for help will do (cf. Jesus, Mt. 21:15).
 - ✓ The weak and unimportant seem to be particularly vulnerable, but with their cries for help, they have access to the infinite power of God to restrain and put down their enemies.
 - ✓ David reminds us that God will use the weak and insignificant to accomplish His purposes. When He does that, we are helped and His greatness is put on display (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29).
 - ✓ Do you want to see God’s power (majesty) and glory? Ask Him for help (which means we are admitting *we aren’t* majestic and we are small and we are humble and dependent — and that’s good).
 - ✓ What are today’s problems? What do you need to know? Ask. He will help (Mt. 7:7-11; Jn. 14:13-14).
- One common temptation is to attempt to be self-sufficient; like a three-year-old saying, “I do it.” And when it is proven we can’t do it, we are tempted to lament (or stay in lament). Here is a reason not to lament but to praise: because God is greater than all and accessible to His people. He will help when we dependently ask Him. There’s a second reason to sing in this broken world...

2. **Worship the Lord for His GREAT CREATION and COMPASSION (vv. 3-4)**

- In verse three, David expands God’s splendor from v. 1 — **when I consider Your heavens...**
 - ✓ To **consider** is to see, to notice, to understand and comprehend. It is observation that turns to meditation and leads to clarity and comprehension.
 - ✓ The focus of His consideration is **Your heavens**... the pronoun emphasizes it belongs to God.

- ✓ And what David observes is the vastness of the created universe. And he is astounded.
 - ✓ It's not just that the universe is so big (and it is big) —
 - On a clear night David could likely see 2,000-3,000 stars. If he had a pair of good binoculars he could have seen up to 100,000 stars.
 - But the universe is much larger than that: if the Milky Way galaxy were the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit into a coffee cup.
 - There are approximately 100 billion stars in the Milky Way; to count them one-by-one would take 3000 years. And the Milky Way is one of perhaps [two trillion galaxies](#) in the universe!
 - ✓ David's point is not just that the universe is so big — it is that it took no energy from the omnipotent God to put it all in place — it was simply the **work of His fingers** (not His “arm” which denotes strength). It took less energy from the Lord than a child making castles in the sand. He flung everything into existence with a simple word (Gen. 1:14ff).
 - ✓ The contemplation of the universe is enough to put us in our place, to make us say with **Charlie Brown**, “I’m beginning to feel insignificant.” Yes. And that’s exactly where David goes in v. 4.
- Why would God in His immensity care about people? The second century Roman philosopher Celsus said, “The root of Christianity is its excessive valuation of the human soul, and the absurd idea that God takes an interest in man.” He has identified the right question: “why should God pay attention to man?”
 - **God has created an immense** and glorious universe, and yet He *is* compassionate toward us —
 - ✓ **What is man...what is son of man?** While the Roman philosopher doubted God’s compassion, that is not what David is asking. He is not asking “Does God care?” He is convinced God does care. He just doesn’t understand *why* God cares. It seems to incongruous that the vast God who has created this universe would also be attentive to frail, weak, insignificant humanity.
 - ✓ But the question is not so much a question as it is a declaration of praise — “He cares! What a God!” David is “engaging in breathless praise.” [Davis] He is amazed that given His smallness in this vast creation that God is compassionate to Him.
 - ✓ And He *is* **compassionate** —
 - **God takes thought of Him** — He is aware of His (and all) people and He is giving attention to them as if there is no one else in the universe. He gives full attention and focus on them.
 - **[God] cares for him** — the word **care** has the idea of visitation — God arrives and intervenes for His people. No matter how weak or insignificant, God works out His gracious plans for them.
 - Jesus Christ, who came to earth to redeem us also exposed and revealed God to us; part of what He revealed was the compassion of God to needy people ([Mt. 9:36](#); 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34).
 - When we are tempted to lament because of hardship and hard people, remember the compassion of God. He is lovingly tender; He knows you, knows your need, and loves to meet your need. And you will grow in your trust of Him as you look at and contemplate His creation.

- ✓ G. K. Chesterton went to London to study at the Slade School of Fine Art as a convinced atheist. Everywhere he looked he saw evidence of a broken and dark world. What changed him? The dandelion. As he saw the structure and beauty of the dandelion he had to re-evaluate his atheism and that led him to become a devoted follower of Christ.
- ✓ Consider the created world of God — and see His compassion in it and turn to Him in dependence.

3. Worship the Lord for His GREAT GRACE (vv. 5-8)

- God has extended grace to us in that He has thoughts of us (v. 4). But it is even more than that — He has endowed us with dignity and worth.
 - ✓ He did not make us as gods — and certainly didn't make us God (a logical impossibility), but He **made them a little lower than God** — He created us in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) — while not God, every human being demonstrates and reveals the image and nature of God.
 - ✓ “Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem.” [Gerhard von Rad]
 - ✓ There are many implications that flow from being made in the image of God — we work, and create, and serve, and have knowledge and wisdom, and are in relationship.
 - ✓ But what this verse points to is that as image bearers of God, we rule over God's creation — He has given us authority in His creation that supersedes all His other created beings (vv. 6-8; Gen. 1:28ff).
 - ✓ Notice this — as vast as the heavens are and as insignificant as we are in size, power, and mortality, God has made us to serve as His designated rulers over this world — not “co-regents” but “sub-regents” of the highest magnitude (second to Him).
 - ✓ This is a massive responsibility — but it is also a great manifestation of grace.
- Are you like me — do you read that and think, “That sounds remarkable, but much of our world doesn't look like it is subdued? It looks like cancer rules. And natural calamities rule. And corrupt rulers rule. But it doesn't look like we are ruling so that there is good and godly order in the world.
 - ✓ Look at Hebrews 2. That writer quotes this passage in vv. 6-8 and makes a similar conclusion: “we do not yet see all things subjected to him [man]” (8b).
 - ✓ And then notice the hopeful **but** in v. 9 — “we see Him who was made for a little while...”
 - ✓ We see Christ, who in the incarnation was made lower than the angels...
 - The word **God** (Ps. 8:5) is a common name of God (Elohim) and that's the best translation.
 - But Elohim has a wide range of meaning that includes **angels** which is the sense that the writer of Hebrews gives it. Psalm 8 is emphasizing the great significance of man while Heb. 2 is emphasizing the great humiliation of Christ who set aside the privileges of Heaven to take on manhood and come to earth to suffer and die for our sin.

- The two passages together emphasize that while the first man was given authority that was lower than God, the second Man (Christ) came to fulfill all that the first man did not do (vv. 10-13).
- ✓ “No, we don’t yet see God’s plan in final, living color, but we do see one man—Jesus!...Because of his suffering of death he has been crowned with glory and honor and reigns already over the whole created order...! And he will bring many sons to glory to share in his reign. Man as such does yet enjoy the destiny mapped out in Psalm 8 but One Man does—and that gives us solid hope.” [Davis]
- God has given great grace to us in the position He has given us in this world; but even more, He has given us a Savior to accomplish what we could not do and bring us into fellowship with Him.
 - ✓ Maybe you are trying to fulfill your role in ruling over God’s creation and things aren’t going well. Everything from allergies to inflation to hard relationships to government frustrations to the Cresson train remind you every single day that you aren’t subduing creation well.
 - ✓ That’s God’s gift to you to remind you that while you are ***a little lower than God***, you aren’t God. But Jesus Christ is. And you can’t rule the world. But He does. And you can’t pay for your sin, but He did. And when you repent of your sin and believe in Him (and believe He is worth following), He will liberate you from your sin (give you an ability not to sin) and give you eternal life.
 - ✓ If you don’t yet believe, I encourage you to believe in Him today. That’s His grace to us and that’s our hope in this lamentable world.

4. Worship the Lord for His **INHERENT GREATNESS** (vv. 1-2)

- Verse 9 is a repetition of the first line in v. 1 — it serves as an inclusio (bracket) telling us the theme of the psalm. In this broken world (Pss. 3-7), God is still worth worshipping.
- When we look to the heavens and observe God’s creation, we understand something of the nature of God and we are led to worship Him. The lamentable troubles of this world are not victorious. God, who is majestic and great and high over creation *is* victorious.
- Let the songs of your heart affirm your delight in and trust of Him. The world is shaky and unstable. God is stable and strong.

CONCLUSION: **King Louis XIV** of France died in 1715 after reigning for 72 years. At his funeral, a single candle was lit above his jewel-encrusted coffin to draw attention to its beauty and the importance of Louis XIV. When the service began, Bishop Massillon who was conducting the funeral, bent down and extinguished that candle. When the people gasped that he would do that, he declared, “Only God is great.”

Oh, friends — the good news today is that He is great indeed. And in your troubles, He will be great, and you can worship. To be steadfast in this troubled world, sing the song of God’s majestic greatness.

BENEDICTION: **Jude 24-25**