

CARING FOR CREATION Sunday School- October 3, 2010

Unifying Topic: GOD'S MAJESTY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Lesson Text

I. The Lord's Glory (Psalm 8:1-2)

II. Who Is Man? (Psalm 8:3-5)

III. Stewardship over Creation (Psalm 8:6-9)

The Main Thought: Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. (Psalm 8:6, KJV)

Unifying Principle: The wonder, beauty, and majesty of the world amaze us. How can we respond to such grandeur? Psalm 8 declares that Sovereign God sustains creation, but God expects humans to share responsibility for the care of all living things.

Lesson Aim: To help students appreciate how the Lord entrusted His creation to us.

Life aim: To teach how the Lord God is glorious and how He blessed His human creatures with His glory and honor. He wants us to care for His creation. He gave us dominion over it.

- 8: 1 O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
8: 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightiest still the enemy and the avenger.
8: 3 when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
8: 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visited him?
8: 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
8: 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.
8: 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
8: 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
8: 9 O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth

1THE STORY OF PSALM 8

When David was young he kept sheep. He was with his sheep on the hills at night. The sheep were safe with him. David saw the moon and the stars in the sky. God made them all. God was strong and powerful. But God had enemies. These enemies fought God. They also hurt the people of God. David felt very small when he looked at what God had made. David felt that he was not important. But David also knew that God would make people strong. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, *'God said, My power works best when you are weak' (2 Corinthians 12:9)*. And now David writes Psalm 8. Perhaps it was when he lived in Gath. Gath was a Philistine city. It was 30 kilometers west of Bethlehem, from which David came. In the psalm David remembered:

- the sheep, the hills and the wild animals
- the moon and stars at night

He put all that he felt into Psalm 8. Perhaps he used music from Gath. The New Testament of the Bible tells us that David was an outstanding musician. In some bibles it would begin: "For the director of music; For the choir director: According to gittith; A psalm of David, to be accompanied by a stringed instrument." Notice that this psalm is meant to be sung. Here it is noted as "of" or "for" the choirmaster or director of music. We can only guess at the meaning of "gittith." The psalm is attributed to David.

TERMS:

Gittith: This term is found in the superscriptions of two other Psalms (81 [Asaph] and 84 [Sons of Korah]), both of which are joyous. It may be assumed that this is a hymn of delight. David rejoices in God's creation; this being the first of the so-called nature Psalms. ²The word Gittith means a winepress but also designates a stringed instrument which was shaped like a winepress. The Greeks took the word and the instrument which it represented and called it a kithara and from that comes the Spanish *guitarria* and from that the English guitar. "**Majestic**" (NIV, NRSV) or "**Excellent**" (KJV) is the adjective 'addîr, "mighty, majestic, noble, principal, stately," from a root that connotes that which is superior to something else, and therefore, that which is majestic.

"**Glory**" (hôd) refers here to God's "splendor, majesty, vigor, glory, honor."

¹ <http://www.easyenglish.info/psalms/psalm008-taw.htm>

² <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/3733/0392.html>

LESSON:

Psalm 8:1-2 The Lord's Glory

8:1 "*O Lord our Lord*"³ The first "*Lord*", signifies that it is a translation of the Hebrew name for God—YHWH (Yahweh); YHWH, the name that evokes His covenant relationship with Israel. The second "*Lord*", (*Adonai*) speaks of strength, and elsewhere in the psalms it is associated with kingship of the Lord (Psalm 97:5, 135:5-12). Taken as a whole, the phrase "*O Lord, our Lord,*" invokes the nearness, strength and reign of God. This God, says David, is "*our*" God: He has entered into relationship with Israel. The word "*majestic*" or "*excellent*" is a royal term that is often used in connection with the public display of awesome power. Yahweh revealed His awesome power to Israel, but David says it is also on display in all the earth. In other words, He is not like the pagan gods, whose power was thought to be geographically limited. David employs two opposites—earth and heaven—to indicate a whole. This is the "*Creator God*" and "*Universal King*", who conquered chaos in creation and who reveals Himself through creation (Genesis 1:2). His name is "*Excellent*" in all the earth and His glory is set above the heavens, meaning it does not diminish. We can't help but rejoice and tremble as God reveals Himself on earth and above the heavens.

1. God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures and those that shine most brightly.
2. We on this earth, only hear of God's excellent name and praise Him; the angels and blessed spirits above see Him in all of His glory and praise Him, and yet He is exalted far above even of their blessing and praise.
3. In high exaltation of the Lord Jesus who is the brightness of His Father's glory, at the right hand of God, and the express image of His person, God set His glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers, and the heavens are declaring His glory. Hallelujah!

TERMS:

Avenger: Someone that hurts the people of God. One who was endeavoring to take revenge, or who was acting as if determined to avenge some imaginary or real wrong.

Babes and Sucklings: infants or young children.

Ordained: "predestined, appointed, established, prepared, equipped."

Still: silence, put at rest, immobilize, hush.

8:2 From the glory of the heavens, to a tiny part of the smallest humans on earth—babies nurse and cry with their mouths, demonstrating their vulnerability. There are two pictures of children in Psalm 8:2.

1. babies at the breast: this tells us:
 - the love of a mother for her child is very strong
 - the child grows strong as it feeds from its mother
2. what children say:
 - their words are usually true
 - their words show what they understand

Babies demonstrate the eternal way of God in which His power is displayed in human weakness. Children are able to trust and praise God without doubts or reservations. They praise God when they sing in our worship services.⁴ How often we see in our children an excitement for praising God? The children are excited to learn about God and recite answers and memory verses they have learned. What explains this desire that they have to praise God even when they are very young?

- These do this because of their childlike nature to respond to God.
- They are children of believers in the church being taught the love of God.
- They are children expressing this praise from their lips because there is just a knowing to do so.

First, this shows the importance of bringing our children to worship as soon as possible. We don't want them to be a distraction to others, but on the other hand we want to teach them at a young age. We want this because God has ordained that these children praise Him. *Second*, this Word of God reminds us that the focus of our homes should be praising the excellent name of God. Life in our homes will come down to one of two things: praising God or serving self.

³ http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/13970/22876_4928.pdf

⁴ <http://www.hudsonvillepc.org/2010/06/02/gods-praise-out-of-childrens-mouths-psalm-82/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

God ordains this praise of our children to silence the enemy and avenger. God uses something as weak and frail as children to become instruments of His great power, He gives us His strength to still the enemy.

- The enemy - The enemy of the writer, regarded also as the enemy of God.
- And the avenger - One who was endeavoring to take revenge, or who was acting as if determined to avenge some imaginary or real wrong.

The enemies we face are three: the wicked world, Satan, and our sinful flesh. God uses the praise of children to silence these enemies. Why? - Because God demonstrates His awesome power by using weak means. David is saying that the Lord brings His enemies to an end through babies and particularly through their trusting dependence. God has "*ordained*" praise (strength), meaning, He is able to prepare praise for Himself from the life of everyone of His children, whether they be young or old. He is more powerful than all His enemies and as praise from the lips of children and infants comes forth; we are in awe of what they say, when they say it and how they deliver it. It is nobody but God! Amazing! We can't help but say look at what God is doing in these children. How excellent is Thy name!

The enemies of the Lord are led by Satan, who was intent on snuffing out the "*seed of the woman*," the eventual descendant of Eve who would save humanity (Genesis 3:15). But the line of descent, which went through David, survived because of the Lord's protection. When the child was finally born, Herod sought to kill Him by murdering all the male children in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16).

That baby in particular has been—and will be—the undoing of many. His coming means the eventual doom of Satan (Revelation 20:10).

Psalm 8:3-5 Who Is Man?

8:3 ⁵Here is young David out under the stars at night watching his sheep. He considered the beauty of nature and its silent witness to the wisdom of God. He sees the ordered procession of the stars and watching them through the night sees how they wheel in silent courses through the heavens. He notices the varying glory of different stars, and the evident vast distances that are visible in the heavens. All the breath-taking beauty of this scene breaks upon his eyes as the sun sets. He is astonished at the greatness of a God who could create such things. The interesting thing is that thirty centuries after David wrote these words we feel the same impression when we consider the starry heavens. How tremendous is the power that sustains it all and keeps it operating as one harmonious unit! That is what impressed this Psalmist.

8:4 Then he faces the inevitable question which comes to man whenever he contemplates God's greatness. What is man, he asks, in the sight of a God who could make a universe like that? The word for "*man*" here is the word that means "*weak and frail*." Our lives are like a vapor, here one moment and gone the next. And yet, God is mindful of us, meaning that He remembers us. "*What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?*" ⁶The word "*care*" has a rich meaning. It literally means, "*to visit*." Because God treasures His creation, He looks for ways to come and get close to us and to visit us with His blessings.

Why does he exist on this small planet in this vast universe? Is there meaning, is there significance, is the reason for his living? Those are the questions that are being asked more and more. To respect God's majesty, we must see ourselves in the light of His greatness. We will be forever wondering God's desire for us. I believe it's just God's compassion, His humility, His adornment He just wants to bestow on creatures who really need His saving righteous power! He sees beyond what we need. What we cannot see, He already knows! Praise God! He's so faithful to what He's created! And since we are made in His image He will see His creation accomplish what He has set them out to accomplish! That's why God Himself became man, went to Calvary in order to redeem fallen humanity. The price that was paid for our redemption proclaims His care for us; proclaims the worth of man that He would visit him. In Jesus Name! We are the pinnacle of His creative power, the apex of His awesome plan for the universe.

⁵ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/3733/0392.html>

⁶ http://www.pontiacbible.org/index.php?/sermons/more/praying_for_a_new_perspective

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

8:5 ⁷In the first chapter of Hebrews, we are told that Jesus was above the angels since He was and is God. But Hebrews 2:7-9 explains that when Jesus became a man, He was made lower than the angels in the sense that He took on human flesh. He was still God. He was God in human flesh. He was temporarily lower than the angels because He took on human form. Therefore, Hebrews 2:7-9 implies that humans are made lower than the angels. Second, scripture never says that we are equal to the angels. Scripture only implies that we are lower than the angels while we live here on this earth. Yet, those who go to heaven will some day judge angels.

"Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?" (NASB) 1 Corinthians 6:3

Some day those who believe in Jesus Christ and follow Him will judge the angels. The saints of the ages will judge the angels. This will occur not while we are made of flesh and bone. It will occur only after we receive new heavenly bodies.

8:5b Man is not the product of accidental circumstances. Man is not the product of a series of chance, random chance, through billions of years. Man is the highest order of God's observable creation here on the planet Earth, where He has crowned him with glory and honour. God's glory is above the heavens; yet He put this same glory and honor on man as a crown. "This is an effective way of identifying man with God and of saying that he has been made in God's image, reflecting God's glory in a way other parts of the creation do not" (Boice). Although man has marred God's image through sin, God has restored it in Jesus Christ. In Him, we are again crowned with glory and honour. God has placed His expressions in man—glory and honour; to have dominion over all living things.

Psalm 8:6-9 Stewardship Over Creation

8:6 ⁸David understood the mandate given to Adam and His descendants at creation (Genesis 1:26-28 and 9:2). By both God's decree and through superior ability, man indeed has dominion over the other creatures and resources of the earth. Thus David can say, "*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.*" Who is him? Man has dominion, however, this can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. The point of the argument of the apostle Paul in Heb.2:8, may be this: It was the original appointment (Gen.1:26).

⁹The verb for "*made him rule*" is "*mashal*." It means "to rule, to reign, to have dominion over." God causes Man to act as His representative. In other words, you and I are not defined by what we have done, but by what we still have to do. Before the "*Fall*", God assigned Man the task of ruling. Now, David tells us that God places that task on us and makes us rule. This verse does not read, "*You created me in such a way that I am able to rule.*" This verse reads, "*You caused me to rule, regardless of my desire; my yearning; my need.*" It means that we are responsible for the way that we handle God's creation even if we don't acknowledge God. Man is the steward of God's assets whether he likes it or not. Man was made for the purpose of ruling and God causes Man to rule. So, you and I are held accountable for what we do with God's creation. Having something placed under one's feet is the language used for authority or dominion. When a city was defeated in war in the ancient world, the victorious generals would often place their feet over the necks of the leaders of those they subdued. This indicated complete and entire subjugation.

¹⁰Adam lost his authority over the earth through sin, at which point the earth was given authority over him. Jesus came as our near kinsman with the right of redemption, having come both of the seed of Abraham and as flesh and blood to establish kinship with Adam (Heb. 2:14). Based upon the law of redemption, then, the whole creation became His servant, for He purchased it and obtained the divine right to receive the dominion that Adam had lost. The book of Hebrews applies this to Jesus Himself, telling us that all of creation, (*panta*) has been subjected to Him (Heb.2:8). The "*all*" is further defined for our benefit so that we do not misunderstand. Again quoting Psalm 8:6, Paul speaks of the extent of Christ's dominion in Eph. 1:21-23. "And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all

⁷ <http://www.neverthirsty.org/pp/corner/read2/r00796.html>

⁸ <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/19008.htm>

⁹ <http://skipmoen.com/tag/psalm-86/>

¹⁰ <http://www.gods-kingdom-ministries.org/coldfusion/Chapter.cfm?CID=153>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

[things] to the church, God has put all things under His feet, and has appointed Him universal and supreme Head of the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of him that fills all and all" In other words, God created "*the all*" and then has reconciled "*the all*" to Himself by means of the cross. You have to be "*in Christ*" to have "*the all*" under your feet. That would mean "*Humility*" means proper respect for God not self-deprecation (self-interest).

8:7-9 Here's the definition of what we are – we are accountable to Him. God owns it all. You and I are accountable to Him for everything we act on, with or through. And He expects us to exercise authority in the same way that He would. The mandate of dominion asks man to use the creatures and resources of the earth, but to use them wisely and responsibly. Here in the Psalms, the dominion extends to all things, including "*sheep, oxen . . . beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea.*" And still, it is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, the ultimate Man; and will be one day also completely fulfilled in His resurrected followers. We should ask ourselves are we preparing to be good or bad rulers of the earth? In light of all this, it is a great tragedy when a man is captured and held in bondage by the things of this world. We were born to have dominion over such material things, instead of being in bondage to them.

When David thought about how vast a dominion God had given to man, it made him praise God all over again. That this humble creature – humble in light of the majesty of the universe, humble in light of its present standing under angelic beings – should be given such authority is a demonstration of both the excellence and the goodness of God. It begins with the celebration of God and ends with that same celebration of God! "*O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*" He is far above us, yet He is our Lord. He is far more righteous than any of us, yet He is our personal Lord. Over all Psalm 8 speaks of the greatness of God, the humble state of man, and man's relationship with the rest of creation. It is completely focused on God throughout. Even when it talks about man the underlying focus is on God. The psalmist recognizes that any glory or dominion that man has is from the Lord.

SUMMARY:

¹¹This Psalms probably comes from the early part of David's ministry, reflecting his experience as a shepherd boy under the starlit heavens at night alone with his sheep on the hillsides of Judea. There he had ample opportunity to observe the glories of God in nature. He can only express it in these beautiful words, "*O Lord our Lord, how excellent (majestic) is thy name in all the earth!*" What it is about God that is so impressive? It is so impressive that it could even, still be grasped and expressed by a child. Yet here is a God who can reveal Himself in such marvelous ways that children, babes, even infants, can grasp what He means. In fact they often understand more rapidly and more thoroughly than the so-called intelligent.

Remember that the Apostle Paul says much the same thing in his opening words in First Corinthians 1:27-28: "*God has ordained, has chosen, the weak things and the things that are not to set at naught the things that are -- to show them up, to expose them -- and to convey messages through weak, foolish and obscure things.*" Every now and then God seems to delight in taking some poor uneducated person and using him in great power to change a nation or the world. He has the ability to convey Himself to the childlike mind. The reason for this, of course, is because children (and those who are childlike) are filled with humility. It is pride that blots out truth. By means of His ability to convey truth to infants, God has founded a bulwark -- erected a wall -- "because of your foes, in order to silence the enemy and the avenger."

The Psalmist now turns to the second thing that has impressed him about God: His wisdom. He is astonished at the greatness of a God who could create the heavens, the moon, and the stars. How tremendous is the power that sustains it all and keeps it operating as one harmonious unit! That is what impressed this Psalmist. Then he faces the inevitable question which comes to man whenever he contemplates God's greatness. "*What is man*", he asks, in the sight of a God who could make a universe like that? And what is "*the son of man that God would even visit him?*" ¹²If I start with God, then I have man in his proper perspective. If I start with man, I have no perspective. Here I am, a speck of dust down on this little planet, and yet, God thinks about me. And His thoughts concerning me are good, not evil. And yet, He also desires to visit with me. But you know what? He has never once said to me, "*I am too busy for you.*" In fact, He seems always so happy whenever I come around. So glad that I came, as though He was longing for my fellowship, when I had everything to gain from it, and He has so little to gain. "*O, how excellent, Lord, is thy name in all the earth!*"

¹¹ <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/3733/0392.html>

¹² http://www.blueletterbible.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=1&contentID=6809&commInfo=25&topic=Psalms
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

God created man in His image and after His likeness. First, man has a unique relationship to God. He was made to be a little less than God (the KJV says, "*a little lower than the angels*"). Now the angels are God's ministering spirits. After all, man was created after God had created the angels. What is included in that remarkable expression is the revelation of God's purpose for man! Man was to be the instrument by which God would do His work in the world and the expression of the character and being of God. He is the creature nearest to God because man is made in God's image. Therefore, while we live here on this earth we are lower than the angels. But when Christians enter heaven they will be higher than the angels because they will be the sons and daughters of the living God (John 1:12).

¹³At the Incarnation, when the pre-eternal Word and Son of God became man, the dignity of humanity was elevated and man is now in a state above that of the angels! How do we know that? In the New Testament, *1 Corinthians 6:2-3*, we read: "*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?*"

¹⁴The Psalmist reminds us that although there is a vast difference in man and God, God has still crowned him with glory and honor. God has given us dominion over all of this earth. Don't miss that. Consider all the works of His hands and then admire the fact that He has given you the dominion over it all. Man can be ruled by God and God will make him fit to rule the earth. God says that it is His desire to crown man with glory; we must not forfeit or tarnish that crown by not having admiration for Him. God tells man, the creature just a little lower than the angels, "As long as I am your Lord, you can be lord of this earth." Every time you consider a beast that man has tamed and uses for his own pleasure, you ought to consider that it was God's plan that we be under His Lordship, just as He allows those beasts to be under ours. We do not serve God because He forces us to; we serve Him because we admire Him and appreciate Him. But there is another reason we serve Him. He allowed His Precious Son to become as we are, lower than the angels. To become as we are and suffer for us, that we might become as He is.

The Psalmist ends as he began, with an expression of the wisdom and worthiness of God. He reminds us again that His Name is an excellent Name. David does not close the psalm by contemplating man's dominion over the earth. But his thoughts once more turn to God. "*Let him who boasts boast of the Lord!*" *1 Corinthians 1:31*.

APPLICATION:

It is imperative to recognize that mankind did not gain dominion over creation by some work of his own. He received it from God. One of God's first commands to Adam says we are to "*take care of*" creation. *Gen.1:28* grants us the kingly role of "*dominion*." God is concerned for even "*insignificant*" creatures. While creation reveals God, God sustains creation. The human creation is the "*crown*" of God's creation, and yet all of creation is enormously valuable. How long has it been since you just spend time adoring God for caring for creation?

¹³ <http://feeds.antiochian.org/1313>

¹⁴ <http://www.all-god.com/Preacher/daily-in-the-psalms-psalm-8.shtml>