

**Scripture**

**Psalm 8**

Last week we finished up an important series of sermon studies from John 15. Today, I want to begin a series of studies from the book of Psalms. I have selected several Psalms that we will look at over the next few weeks. I have not done a survey about this, but I would guess that for many people, if they have a favorite verse or passage of Scripture, many of them would refer to a verse from the book of Psalms. I would imagine that there are many people who when they decide they want to start reading the Scriptures, will first turn to the book of Psalms. When people experience fear, or anxiety, or hopelessness, many people will turn to the book of Psalms for guidance, or comfort, or encouragement.

**What is the benefit of studying the Psalms?** (Based on the writing of James Sire: [Learning to Pray through the Psalms.](#))

- **They teach us to Pray.** We sometime hear the book of Psalms referred to as the Bible's hymn book, but maybe more importantly the book of Psalms is the **Bible's Prayer Book. The Psalms put words to the hunger and longing of our soul.** Eugene Peterson calls the Psalms the "**Answering Speech of God's people.**" The composers of the Psalms reflect on what God has done or is doing and responds to that (answers God). We may not always be able to articulate our thoughts or feelings about what is happening in our lives or in our world. As we pray, sometimes we have a hard time coming up with words that honestly express what we want to say. But as we read the Psalms, we find the words we want. We can make their words, our words.
- **They help us to Worship:** The book of Psalms is a book of worship, expressing joy, and praise to God for His handiwork. Again the Psalms **give us language to worship God.** Many Psalms are used in corporate worship services by God's people.
- **Inspire with Hope.** The Psalms are filled with words of hope and encouragement. As we read about the situations or danger that the composers of the Psalms find themselves, they are able to find hope that God will deliver them. When we find ourselves in a situation that is dark and bleak, the Psalmists assure us that God is in control and is able to deliver us

While the Psalms are composed out of ancient circumstances – for a specific situation – they are universal and contemporary in application.

So the Psalms are as valuable for our Spiritual growth as other Scriptures are: ***16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God<sup>[a]</sup> may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

**Psalm 8.** I have chosen to begin our series with Psalm 8. The heading tells us that this is a **Psalm of David.** There is no reference to a particular event in David's life that prompted the composition of this Psalm. It is a Psalm for David to affirm his worship of his God.

Eugene Peterson says that Psalm 8 is an **orienting Psalm.** Both of my sons were Boy Scouts. One of the badges that they both earned was called **Orienteering.** In this Merit badge, the scout, learns how to navigate their way through the forest. They learn how to use a compass and other resources to get back on the right path, and make their way to safety. Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night and feel disoriented? You are not sure where you are, or how you got here. You need to just lay still, or sit still before you get up, to get your bearings. When I feel disoriented, I feel anxious, or afraid or even paralyzed. Once my mind clears and I figure out where I am, I can feel peace again. Sometimes we can experience a sort of **spiritual disorientation.** We lose our way. We are just going through life aimlessly, not sure why we are here on this earth, or what our purpose is while we are here. As an **Orienteering Psalm,** Psalm 8 can be a psalm that helps us get oriented, to get on track.

**Vs. 1 – LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.** Hearing the word Lord repeated like this sounds a little awkward to us. But the words in the Hebrew language are two different words. In our

English Bibles, the first **LORD** appears as all Capital letters. When we see that word LORD, it is a translation of the Hebrew name for God. The name is expressed with 4 consonants **YHWH**. Translators must fill in the vowels and it becomes **YAHWEH**. It is the name that God reveals to Moses at the burning bush. Moses asks God to identify Himself. God declares that His name is **I Am that I Am**. It is the literal meaning of the name **Yahweh**. Yahweh is the personal name of Israel's God. Yahweh is the God who entered into covenant with the nation. Yahweh is the God who declared "**I will be Your God.**" Anytime you see the word **LORD**, (all caps) it refers to the Covenant God of Israel, **Yahewh**.

Now, the second "Lord" in the verse is the word Adonai. It means what we typically understand when we use the word Lord – the one who is king, who is ruler of a people. A title that an inferior would use to address his master, or king, someone who is superior to him or her. The NRSV translates the verse like this: **O LORD, our sovereign**. So the literal meaning of this line is **Yahweh is our King, our ruler, our sovereign**.

So David begins this Psalm expressing his commitment to the LORD as his king.. He is **orienting his life toward God**, away from himself, or away from everything else. As David affirms his submission to Yahweh, he declares that the name of the Lord is excellent. The word **excellent means broad, large, powerful. He is incomparable in His omnipotence**. David affirms that **Israel's God is over all**. Often times in ancient times, people understood that Gods were local deities. Their power and reign were limited geographically. But David affirms that Israel's God, Yahweh is not just another localized deity. He is in fact Lord over all the earth and the heavens.

**Vs. 2.** When we recognized God's power and majesty, Praise is due Him. Songs of praise to God are a source of power and protection for God's people. David is aware that God has enemies in this world. Not all are in submission to Him. But songs of praise – even the simplest songs of praise, songs that children would sing – will break the power of God's enemies. That is important for us to remember. When you are oppressed and under attack by the voices of the enemies of God, words and songs of praise will give us victory. We are reminded of the scene in the Philippian jail in the book of Acts. Paul and Silas were in chains, facing an uncertain outcome. But they worshiped the Lord through singing.

**Vs. 3.** As David's attention is drawn to the glory of God revealed in the heavens, he is overwhelmed by the thought that this great Sovereign Lord is concerned with people. Why should God care about people? Its as if David is contemplating, with such a big creation to manage, why should God consider humans worthy of His time. He does not raise the question here, but we could ask it – Mankind has rebelled against God, disobeyed. But there is no mention of that. In spite of our "smallness", and sinfulness, we still have value and worth:

**Vs. 5.** Mankind has value and worth because they are the work of God's hand. God made us. And He didn't just make us as living creatures: "**You have made them a little lower than the angels.**" The literal translation is "**heavenly beings.**" Some of our translations use the word angels. Some even use the word **Divine beings, or God**. And God has crowned humanity with glory and honor. When God created humans, he declared that they would "**share His image.**" **Genesis 1**. Humans are set apart from the rest of creation. People are the pinnacle of His creative work. We are the glory of His handiwork.

C. S. Lewis once wrote a word of rebuke to those who may consider themselves, just an "Ordinary Person". He writes that there are NO ORDINARY PEOPLE. All people have been granted glory and honor as God's creation.

Not only has humanity been honored with glory, Yahweh has given us responsibility to care for His creation. (**vs. 6-8**). David is overwhelmed by our position in God's universe and now he is aware of our purpose in this world. The Bible speaks of God's mandates for humanity. Whenever we think about our purpose in the world, we are first of all reminded of Christ's great Commission to us – **Go into all the world and make disciples. Evangelism is our purpose**. But we also learn that we have another mandate. **A second mandate is to serve society**. Jesus declares that we are to **Salt and Light** in the world, serving others through our good works. As we read this Psalm we become aware of a **third mandate** that God has place upon us. **We have a purpose to care for creation**. God has given us the mission to rule over the works of His hands. Christopher Wright points out that **if you love someone, you will not "Trash His Property!"** Caring for God's creation is as important as the mandate to spread the gospel, and to serve humanity.

So as Petersen observes, the Psalm helps to put our lives on the right track.

- Our purpose is to live in relationship with God. Our LORD is the Lord. We must live to recognize and declare His glory. His glory can be seen everywhere we look.
- God has declared our value and worth as His creation.
- And finally God has given our lives a purpose – to serve Him by caring for His world.

Is your life headed in the right direction today? Or do you need to re-orient yourself to love God and serve Him alone.

As David reflects on these truths, his heart is once again moved to praise and worship: ***O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!***

Prayer.