

The Majesty of Our King

Psalm 8:1-9

We turn again this morning to another Psalm of David given to the director of music, according to *gittith*. There is uncertainty about what that means. Some suggest it refers to the Philistine town of Gath. David lived there for a period of months during his exile while fleeing Saul. Gath means winepress so the term may refer to the time of the grape harvest such as the Feast of Tabernacles or to the time when David brought the Ark of the Covenant from the home of Obed-edom to Jerusalem. It is also thought to be some type of musical tune or even an instrument named after the city. The point is, we don't know what it means, but it is a beautiful psalm to consider.

While this psalm is only 9 verses long, it beckons us to consider the splendor of God. It celebrates the glory of God and gives us a perspective of who we are in comparison to Almighty God. As we consider creation, it is truly a psalm that should humble us on the one hand, and exalt God on the other. It helps us answer the question as to why we are here. It answers the first question posed by the Westminster Catechism: *What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.* From the beginning to the end, God is to be praised. From the earth to the heavens, He is to be glorified. As we look around, do we magnify Him enough? The short answer is most likely no.

Open your Bibles to **Psalm 8** and let's discover from David giving God the glory He is due.

Let's consider from **verses 1-2** that we have a call to praise our God.

I. A CALL TO PRAISE OUR GOD – vv. 1-2

There are a lot of people today who seek praise. It could be for their athletic prowess, their political savvy, their entrepreneurial keenness, their musical overtures, their academic achievement, their scientific discovery, or their entertainment ability. They seek the spotlight, camera, headline, or red-carpet glamor. Theirs is a world of wanna-be's, to

gain recognition today because tomorrow someone else will rise up to take their place. They want the self-designated acclaim of being the greatest and they ride that wave of fame as long as they can. They seek the praise of others and people are all too willing to give them what they feel they deserve.

But there is One who rightly deserves all the praise and David brings us into God's presence that we might open our mouths and offer Him our praise. Notice in **verse 1** that we are to praise His person.

A. We Are to Praise God's Person – v. 1a

A reason to praise God is that His name is majestic.

Have you ever been at a loss for words? I have never visited the Grand Canyon, but I understand that its grandeur leaves people speechless. I was curious about what places around the world are considered the most beautiful and breathtaking. Of course, its purely subjective, but it included places like the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone National Park, the Alps, the Grand Tetons, the California Redwood forest, the Bamboo Forest of Japan, and Outer Hebrides in Scotland. It included places in Africa, Antarctica, Iceland, Cambodia, Vietnam, Greece, France, Venezuela and Mongolia. I would suggest that you could go anywhere in all the world and find stunning and breathtaking beauty that would leave us without words, places where pictures don't do it justice. All you can do is just stop and gaze in awe.

But there is something beyond these places that should leave us speechless and that is the name of God. He is beyond our ability to define or describe. David begins with God: **"O Lord, our Lord"**. Now that may sound redundant, but we must realize that in the Hebrew it's actually two different words for Lord.

The first is the word YHWH, also translated Jehovah. It is the personal covenant name of God. It comes from the Hebrew verb meaning 'to be.' It is the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. You remember that scene. Moses is out tending his flock of sheep when he notices a strange thing. He sees a bush on fire but it's not being consumed. **Every couple of years I have a brush pile**

in the back yard that builds up and when I get the opportunity, I burn it and over a couple of hours the pile is reduced to ash. Not this bush. It seemed to be on fire, but it wasn't burning up, so Moses moved in to take a closer look at this unusual sight. As he drew nearer, not only was the bush not being consumed by flames, but it also talked and told Moses to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. How many of you would agree that anywhere God is, is holy ground? Well, as the account in **Exodus 3** continues God and Moses have a conversation. God has selected and instructed Moses to return to Egypt where he is to lead the Israelites out of bondage and take them to the Promised Land God had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as an inheritance. Moses had a few objections and some questions. "If I go and say to them that You sent me, and they ask Your name, who do I say sent me, what is the name You want me to give?" God told Moses to tell them 'I AM' has sent you.

"I AM" is a name that speaks of His eternal, self-existence, and self-sufficient nature. It speaks of His always being in existence, having never been created nor does He need anything outside Himself to sustain Him. The name "I AM" could be translated "I am who I am" or "I will be what I will be" or "I am the One who is." It is the name by which He made His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The second name David uses for Lord is 'Adonai'. This name refers to His being Sovereign or Lord. It is a name that speaks of power, authority, and might. It is a title of respect and reverence.

David's opening address to God could read "O eternal covenant God, our personal Sovereign."

David says that this God, our Lord, has a name that is majestic and is majestic in all the earth. The word 'majestic' implies royalty. In Britain, they refer to the king or queen as His Majesty or Her Majesty. It is a title of respect and reverence, one of awe. God's name is majestic. We are not to use that name in vain.

Exodus 15:11 "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?"

In his book Knowing God, J.I. Packer helps us understand a little better the meaning of majesty. Our word majesty comes from the Latin word which means greatness. He says that **"when we ascribe majesty to someone, we are acknowledging greatness in that person, and voicing our respect for it."**

So when we talk about the majesty of God's name, we are referring to His greatness. Remember that in the Bible, when it speaks of someone's name, it is referring to their character, their nature, their attributes. His name speaks of all that He is and all of His power.

Psalm 48:1 "Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise."

Psalm 93:1 "The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed in majesty and is armed with strength."

Psalm 145:3, 5 "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, no one can fathom His greatness. They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and I will meditate on Your wonderful works."

Packer continues by stating that **"the word majesty, when applied to God, is always a declaration of His greatness and an invitation to worship...that He is far above us in greatness, and is to be adored."**

If we are to praise God as He deserves then we must do two things according to Packer. **"The first is to remove from our thoughts of God limits that would make Him small. The second is to compare Him with powers and forces which we regard as great."** In other words, when we reduce Him in power or character, we reduce His greatness. When we do that, it's just one step away from worshipping ourselves. How important it is to see the majesty of God.

Great is the Lord and worthy of glory!

Great is the Lord and worthy of praise!

Great is the Lord! Now lift up your voice; lift up your voice: Great is the Lord! Great is the Lord!

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When we comprehend that God is everywhere we are and sees everything we do and knows everything we think, we will begin to understand how majestic is His name and the praise He is due.

Again, Packer provides some perspective when he writes: “Here, then, is the first step in apprehending the greatness of God: to realize how unlimited are His wisdom, and His presence, and His power.”

If you want just a glimpse of His majesty, take some time this week to read **Job 38-41**. Even if you only scan it, you will come away with a new and greater appreciation of His greatness.

David tells us that we are not only to praise God’s person, we are also to praise God’s position.

B. We Are to Praise God’s Position – v. 1b

“You have set Your glory above the heavens.”

He is seated on His throne that is high above any other throne. No one is superior to Him and His glory fills heaven.

Considering again **Exodus 15**, the Israelites were singing a song of praise extoling God’s greatness in delivering them from a 400 year bondage in Egypt as well as totally destroying their army. Remember, they had been immersed in a culture that worshipped many gods, and one by one, through the various plagues, the Living, Almighty God showed the Israelites that they weren’t gods at all, but powerless concoctions of man’s imagination. **Exodus 15:11 “Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?”**

In the margin of my study Bible I jotted these notes related to that verse.

God is morally excellent
 God is majestically excellent
 God is miraculously excellent

You Are High
 Above All Nations;
 Your Glory Shines
 Above The Heavens

Psalms 113:1-6

The four living creatures and the 24 elders gathered around the throne of God have it right when they exclaim **“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to**

receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.” (Revelation 4:11)

“He has set His glory above the heavens.”

O worship the King, all glorious above,
 And gratefully sing His wonderful love;
 Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
 Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

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We are to praise God’s person.
 We are to praise God’s position.
 We are to praise God’s power.

C. We Are to Praise God’s Power – v. 2

Think for a moment about an infant or toddler. **How does God receive praise from them? How does their praise silence God’s enemies?**

Matthew 21:12-16

The praise of children acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah and that He was worthy of their praise. The religious leaders who should have known the truth about Jesus, but instead rejected Him, were silenced by the praise of these children, who did receive Him.

Infants and toddlers are humble and dependent. They see things as they are and exhibit a faith that doesn’t depend on sight.

Matthew 11:25 “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

Matthew 18:1-4 “At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’”

To humble Pharaoh, God sent a baby who years later would overthrow the power of Egypt by the hand of God.

God sent a child in the person of Samuel who would become a great prophet.

God sent His Son, born of a virgin, to overthrow the power of sin and death.

It was a youth who stood against a giant and defeated the Philistine army with just a sling and a stone but more importantly in the name of God.

I Corinthians 1:26-31

“From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise because of Your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.”

The Message: **“Nursing infants gurgle choruses about You; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.”**

John Calvin rightly stated that the **“Process of the conception and birth of an infant displays God’s splendor so clearly that even a nursing infant brings down to the ground the fury of God’s enemies.”** He didn’t know anything about the complex biological and chemical processes that take place in both the mother and child at birth. Yet he understood that through them they give praise and silence the most skeptic. **How can you not look at a baby either in the womb, or during its birth or even nestled in your arms and not see God’s handiwork?** It truly silences those who say it’s just the process of random chance.

Wrap your noodle around this. At nine months after conception, the baby’s brain sends a hormone through the placenta and into the mother’s pituitary gland with a message that says “I’m ready.” All its systems – lungs, heart, gastrointestinal system, nervous system, and brain are ready to be on their own. The skull has not yet fused making it pliable enough to fit through the birth canal. At that moment, the baby’s adrenal gland sends a hormone to help the baby cope with the stress of delivery. Even though these complex systems are ready to be on their own, the baby will not breathe until it is outside the birth canal. Too soon and it would suffocate. Too late and it would suffer brain damage. Just before mother and baby are separated, the newborn gets one last blood transfusion through the umbilical cord. The placenta has stored nutrients for the exact moment. Chance? Hardly!

Infants and children silence the enemies of God.

David opens this psalm with a call to praise our God. Next, David continues with a call to ponder our God.

II. A CALL TO PONDER OUR GOD – vv. 3-8

David says we should ponder God’s creation.

A. Ponder God’s Creation – v. 3

A famous explorer by the name of William Beebe, was a good friend of Theodore Roosevelt. Often when he would visit the President, they would go outdoors at night and see who could be the first one to locate the Andromeda galaxy. They would stare at that little smudge of distant starlight and one of them would recite “that is the spiral galaxy of Andromeda, roughly the size of the Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 750,000 light years away, consisting of 100 billion suns, each one larger than our sun. Roosevelt would then say “Now I think we are small enough! Let’s go to bed.”

When we start to think that we’re hot stuff, all we need to do is look at the stars and that puts things in perspective. If we want a dose of reality, just look around and look up. God made all that without even breaking a sweat. He moved His finger and made that star or galaxy and put it in its place.

Consider the sheer magnitude of space. It’s estimated that there are some 2 trillion galaxies with 200 billion visible galaxies. The visible universe has an estimated radius of 46.5 billion light years. The largest galaxy is IC 1101 and is 50 times larger than the Milky Way. If we could travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles per second, it would take us 8 minutes to get to our sun. To go from the sun to the middle of the Milky Way would take about 33,000 years. The Milky Way belongs to a cluster of galaxies known as the Local Group. To cross that group galaxies would take us two million years. The Local Group belongs to a larger Local supercluster called the Virgo Cluster and would take us 20 billion light years to cross.

And that’s just the complexity of the universe.

What about our world?

According to the National Geographic, scientists have estimated that there are around 8.7 million species of plants and animals.

My dad loves his bird feeders and watches the finches, jays, pileated woodpeckers, hummingbirds all flock to eat seed, orange sections, and sugared water. He's had deer, bear, and even a bobcat in his backyard along with family who bring their dogs.

Think back to **Genesis 1** and the creation week and we see all that He made: plants and birds and sea creatures and land animals, each after their own kind and at the end of each day said it was good.

But then how about the human body? The human brain has 10 billion nerve cells interacting in coordination allowing us to function. So when someone gets on your last nerve, they have passed through 9 billion, 999 million, 999 thousand, 999 other nerves to get to that last one.

Our eyes have 100 million receptor cells in each retina, which also contains four other layers of nerve cells. The system makes billions of calculations per second, traveling through the optic nerve to the brain, which has more than a dozen separate vision centers to process it.

Our skin has more than 2 million tiny sweat glands, about 3,000 per square inch, to regulate temperature.

Our heart beats an average of 75 times per minute, which amounts to 40 million times a year or 2 ½ billion times in 70 years, pumping 3,000 gallons of blood per day.

Our body has 206 bones designed for specific purposes connected to over 500 muscles, tendons, and ligaments. Some of those muscles are voluntary and respond on command, others are involuntary and react automatically.

Our digestive system contains 35 million glands that secrete juices to digest food.

And what about our lungs, senses, and immune system? We could go on and on pondering all the things that God has created and still not plumb the depths of God's creation. Truly we are all fearfully

and wonderfully made. No wonder at the end of the 6th day of creation God exclaimed that it was all very good.

This past week I took a moment to ask myself this question: we read in **Romans 8:22** that the whole world is groaning, it has been affected by the curse of sin. It produces thorns and thistles and is subject to the catastrophic effects of earthquakes and tornados and tsunamis and volcanic eruptions and the like. **If God says it all declares His glory, what will the new heaven and new earth be like?** I can't wait to see it.

In light of what David simply draws our attention to in **verse 3**, he asks a sobering question that gives us pause to ponder our capacity. **In light of God's creation, who are we in the scheme of things?**

B. Ponder Our Capacity – vv. 4-8

When we consider the vastness of God's creation, **“what is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”**

Dr. Dick, who was a friend of Spurgeon, wrote in his book The Solar System that **“A survey of the solar system has a tendency to moderate the pride of man and to promote humility.”**

Tony Evans notes that **“modern man tends to be full of himself because God is so small in his eyes. But, when we see God as He truly is, we understand how minuscule we are.”**

The first Hebrew word for man refers to man in his frailness. The second reference to man hints at man's fallen condition.

In other words, when we take a look around at the world and upward into space, it ought to humble us by making us realize how small we are. **Why would God even look our way, let alone care for us?**

Genesis 1:26 gives us one reason. Unlike everything else He made, only man was created in God's image.

And as we said earlier, we were created to give God glory, to praise Him.

John 3:16 gives us another reason why He looks our

way. He loved us enough to send His Son to die in our place so that by faith in Him, we might not perish but have everlasting life.

Now notice something important. David doesn't say that we were made a little higher than the animals as modern science would have us believe. It says that we were made a little lower than heavenly beings and crowned with glory and honor. But sin destroyed that glory and honor. We lost the responsibility of being caretakers of God's creation. Man had been elevated to a position of authority in the garden, but sin caused that dominion to be lost.

Man had been created a little lower than heavenly beings to reflect the wonder that we are made in God's image. Leupold writes **"Nowhere is man's dignity asserted more clearly and boldly than in this passage. But we again remind the reader that the reference is to man before the fall."**

But what the first Adam lost through sin; the second Adam restored through His redemptive act on the cross. The writer of Hebrews quotes **verse 5** in **chapter 2** in reference to the incarnation of Christ in order to identify with us. **Hebrews 2:10** says we are brought to glory through Christ. Through His death He made our salvation possible. While this passage points to our position in God's creation, this psalm is Messianic as it points to Christ, who according to Philippians 2 set aside His glory and came to earth, made a little lower than the heavenly beings in order to identify with those for whom He would die to save.

When World War II broke out, Queen Elizabeth was a teenager. When she was old enough, she asked her father, King George VI, to allow her to join the armed services and serve Britain like others were doing. He finally allowed her to join the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a private. She had a superior officer who took pleasure in bossing and bullying her. "Private Windsor, do that." "Yes, sergeant" was all she could say. She was made a little lower than the non-commissioned officers for the sake of serving her people. On February 6, 1952, all that changed when she received word that her father had died. From that day on she was not Private Windsor,

but elevated to Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Hebrews 2:9 says that when Jesus became a man, He was made a little lower than the angels, for the sake of His people. But after His resurrection and then His ascension, He was elevated to glory sitting at the right hand of the Father, having made possible the opportunity for us to one day be restored and elevated to experience His glory forever. We are temporarily made below the heavenly beings, but one day we will be exalted.

Psalm 8 is ultimately fulfilled through Christ. Man has done some incredible feats throughout history, but man can never achieve what it so desperately needs but so rigorously denies – it's need for God. Through his efforts, he seeks independence from God. Only through Christ can the glory man had before sin be restored. Which brings us back full circle to where we started: giving praise to God.

When we honestly consider who God is and who we are in comparison, it is pride that keeps us from giving God the praise He deserves. But if, on the other hand, we honestly consider who God is compared to who we are in the vast realm of creation, if we are truly humble of heart, we will praise God and declare **"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth."**

We will join with the angelic host whom Isaiah had the privilege of seeing and declare with them: **"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3)**

Step back, take a good and honest look in the mirror, then look around you and then look up into the heavens and then do the only thing you can do in that moment, and that is to give God praise for His greatness.