

St Marcs Grenoble
Psalms for the Summer
Psalm 8 – A Psalm of Trust
7 July 2024

After months and months of rain Summer 2024 has finally started. And so I want to begin my sermon on a warm summer's evening. But not in 2024. The year I am thinking of was 1885. The place was somewhere in Sweden. And Carl Gustav Boberg was out walking in the warmth of the evening. As he looked up at the sky and all around him, he was deeply moved – and he started writing and writing and writing. He just could not help himself. The beauty and majesty of creation that he could see with his own eyes and feel with all his senses moved him to worship the creator God. From the depths of his soul, *'from the abundance of his heart'* (Luke 6:45) he could not help himself but to praise the God who was his maker and the Jesus who was his saviour.

Oh Lord My God, when I in Awesome Wonder,
Consider all the works Thy hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

*Then sings My soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

From the depths of his soul he could not help himself but to praise the God who was his maker and the Jesus who was his saviour.

I wonder if like me you suffer from 'foot in mouth' disease. Most of us do. We are always putting our foot in it. Somehow the things that are going on in our hearts just spill out into words and we say the wrong thing. Indeed the very thing that we were thinking. But knew that we should not say. That is why I love the psalms. All 150 of them. Set in the middle of the Old Testament. They are hymn book of the Jewish people. And in their hymns the Jews set down all that was going on in their hearts and brought them to God in prayer or in praise. Some of the psalms are full of thanksgiving. Some are full of desperation. Some are full of guilt. Some full of lament. Some full of praise for who God is. There is a psalm for every occasion and for every human situation. However you have come to church today – there is a psalm for you.

Running throughout the whole Bible is the theme of God the creator. And the psalms are no different. Just as Carl Gustav Boberg was moved to praise God because of the beauty of creation, so were the writers of the psalms. Psalm 8, begins and ends with the phrase 'O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth'. As the writer spent time meditating on the *heavens, the moon and the stars* he wanted to praise God. As he spent time watching *'all [the] sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,'* he wanted to recognise God's glory.



One of my earliest experiences of God happened one summer afternoon after games at my junior school. Everyone had left and I was sitting quietly in the middle of playing field. The sun was shining and the wind was blowing gently. As I sat and listened, and as I stayed completely still, I had a strong sense that I was in the presence of God and that all would be well. That afternoon I had a wonderful sense of calm and well-being that I can remember nearly 50 years later. For me, that simple memory is a very clear reminder that I need to make sure that I spend time *'Considering the lilies of the field'* (Matthew 6:28) just as Jesus encouraged us to do. Somehow I always seem too busy or too distracted by other things. And yet I know that when I deliberately spend time meditating on nature, I am not disappointed and always gain a new sense of perspective. When could you spend some time this week *'considering the lilies of the field'*?

Just as Psalm 8 encourages to be mindful of creation and the creator God – it also includes the revelation that God is mindful of us. And that he cares for us. As the writer of the psalm meditates on creation he begins to realise that God has made human beings in his own image and that he has shared responsibility for the whole of creation with us.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; ⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? ⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour. ⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;

I love the phrase *'you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour'*. Every human being is so important that we *'are [just] a little lower than God'*. Every human being is so important that he has shared with us his *'glory and honour'*.



We live in a highly competitive age. Everywhere we look we can see people scrabbling to be important, to be noticed, to be recognised. Sometimes pushing other people down who get in the way. It impacts every human organisation, every family and even the church. We just cannot help ourselves because of the sinfulness of our hearts. *'The sinful person out of sinful treasure in his heart produces sin; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks'* (Luke 6:45).

But human striving for self importance is the very opposite of God's intention. Psalm 8 makes this plain. God shares his glory and honour with every human being. Not just some. But all. Everyone here. He wants us all to know that we our beloved and forgiven deep in our hearts. He wants us all to stand tall and to fill out the space that he has made for us in eternity. Because of this Psalm 8 is often called the *'The Psalm of Creation and Human Dignity'*.



Much more than human rights, all human beings were given dignity by God before we were conceived. Everyone of us. Without exception. All of us. Being mindful of the dignity that God has given us is very powerful. It changes how we see ourselves. And it changes how we see others. In 2020 Pope Francis said

'In the history of every person, the Father sees again the story of his Son who came down to earth. Every human story has an irrepressible dignity. It is important for each person to remember who and what they are in God's eyes and to bear witness to what the Holy Spirit has written in their hearts'.

Psalm 8 is a wonderful psalm of praise. It lifts our hearts to look again at God's glory in creation and to look again at the glory and honour that he has given to every human being.

You and I are living through the most complicated of times. Every organisation, every community, every nation, every continent is not yet fully recovered from Covid. The news of war and fighting is never far away – the fighting in Ukraine and Gaza and all across Africa are never far from the headlines. And at the same time there seem to be general elections everywhere – the UK, the US, India, South Africa, and of course France.

It is a moment when we could so easily have our eyes down on the ground. Psalm 8 reminds us to lift our eyes to look again at God's glory in creation and to look again at the glory and honour that he has given to every human being.

In the week to come why not spend some time looking at creation and 'giving thanks to God the Father for everything' that you see.

And when you leave home and go to work, or to exercise or to go out shopping remember that each person you see is made in the full image of God. And when you treat them with respect – remember that you are recognising the very dignity that God has given them.

*Then sings My soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

Amen.