

TEXT: Psalm 8

Sermon # 00000

TITLE: God, Man, and Messiah

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FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS: People tend to take for granted God's condescending love and care for them and fail to show appreciation.

PROPOSITIONAL STATEMENT: Because God has revealed his glory both through his natural creation and through his grace, you must praise God.

Introduction:

- 1) Pre-Intro: Three great themes of contrast are intertwined in today's text: (1) God—his greatness and his condescension (or his transcendence and immanence); (2) Man—his insignificance and his regal dignity; and (3) Messiah, Jesus Christ—his incarnation in weakness and humility and his elevation to rule over all creation. Please note these themes as we read today's text. <<Read Text>> <<Pray>>
- 2) David is the author of this Psalm, which spans all of human history. In it he looks backward to man's Creation as well as looking forward to man's destiny in the future Kingdom of Christ. Although this Psalm not technically considered to be a Messianic Psalm, it is quoted at least four times in the NT and directly applied to Christ in each case. Thus, we need to look behind the immediate references to "mankind" in these verses and look for their ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because we have been united with Christ our head, we are destined to share in his rule.
- 3) This psalm will also correct a common human problem: ***People tend to take for granted God's condescending love and care for them. They lack appreciation for the tremendous benefits that God has bestowed upon them by grace.*** The psalmist's meditations point us to two great arenas in which God has revealed his glory: First, God reveals his glory through his magnificent works in the natural creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." (Ps 19:1). Second, God reveals his glory through his condescending grace to weak and fallen man. ***Because God has revealed his glory both through his natural creation and through his grace, you must praise God.***

Transition: The psalm divides into three sections: (1) verses 1-2; (2) verses 3-5; and (3) verses 6-8, followed by a repetition of the theme in verse 9. The theme is stated at both the beginning and the end of the psalm (vv.1, 9): praise to God. The psalmist here guides you to meditate on three powerful truths that should stoke your desire to praise God.

- I. Praise God for the revelation of his divine majesty. (1-2)
 - A. God has revealed his name in all the earth. (1a)
 1. "O LORD, our Lord" **Explanation:** The psalmist first addresses God as Yahweh. God reveals himself personally to his own people by his covenant name. He is self-existent, self-sufficient, and always faithful and consistent with his own character. Secondly, he addresses him as "Lord" (Adonai). This title acknowledges God's claim and right to rule over the lives of his people.
 2. "How majestic is your name in all the earth!" **Explanation:** This is an exclamation expressing praise to God directly. God's name is his revealed character; it is his personal reputation among men. ***The first place in which God displays the divine majesty of his***

person is "in all the earth." This includes in its scope all of God's works in the visible world around us; it includes his mighty acts and deeds in human history recorded in the sacred record. God has clearly made his faithful character, his power, and his holiness known to all the world.

B. God has exhibited his glory in the heavens (1b)

1. "You have set your glory above the heavens" **Explanation:** *The second place in which God has chosen to display his glory is "above the heavens."* The "heavens" here are the starry heavens, in which the stars, planets, and galaxies move. The universe is God's showpiece for the display of his power, wisdom, and glory before all creation.
2. **Argument:** People in ancient times lacked all of the scientific instruments that we possess today to investigate the stars. Nevertheless, since the dawn of time thoughtful men observed them and acknowledged the immeasurable vastness of the starry heavens; they carefully studied the innumerable stars that filled it, and calculated the amazing precision of their movement across the sky. 2000 years before Christ, God told Abraham to look at the stars as an illustration of the numberless multitude of descendants that God would give to him. Today, we have telescopes, satellites, space probes, and powerful cameras that search the sky with great precision. Although our knowledge about the universe has expanded dramatically, we are still incapable of counting the number of the stars, even with the most powerful computers available. The deeper we look into space, the more stars become visible; we still have no idea how big the universe actually is because we have never yet found its boundaries.
3. **Explanation:** What this verse is saying is NOT that God's glory is IN the heavens, but that God's glory is ABOVE the heavens. In other words, no matter how vast, and marvelous, and glorious the starry heavens are, God's glory is far greater!

C. God has demonstrated his power in weak, lowly, and despised things. (2)

1. **Argument:** At first look, verse 2 seems out of place; we find it difficult to understand the connection of verse 2 with what goes before and after it in the context. However, its purpose is central and essential to the message of this Psalm.
2. "babies and infants" **Explanation:** These terms refers to little children. Because the Jewish custom was to nurse children much longer than we do—they would nurse until a child was two or three years old—these terms include little children that were just learning to walk and talk. The key point that the Psalmist is bringing out about them is that they are small, weak, lowly, and insignificant.
3. "you have established strength" **Explanation:** God uses weak, foolish, and insignificant things to accomplish his purposes and to display his glory before the world. In **Matt. 21:14-16** Jesus applied this verse to himself. God used the praise of children, literally, to overthrow the opposition of the proud and powerful priests and rulers of the temple. (cp. **Matt 11:25**). This parallels God's call to all men to become as little children in order to enter God's kingdom. *Thus, the third place that God reveals his glory is in weak and lowly mankind!*
4. **Argument:** This is a general principle of God's mode of operation. Cp. **1Cor. 1:27**. This is also one of the major points of this psalm: God has chosen weak, foolish, and insignificant mankind as his vice-regent to rule over all creation. Perhaps among other examples, he had in mind the defeat and humiliation of the giant Goliath and the enemies of God's people, when David was a mere shepherd youth. Ultimately, this principle was demonstrated when God sent his son, Jesus Christ to become a weak,

lowly, and insignificant man, to suffer a humiliating death of weakness and powerlessness on the cross, after which he was elevated through resurrection and ascension to become God's Ruler over all creation. The psalmist considers it the greater demonstration of God's glory and an added inducement for men to praise God that he shows his power and accomplishes his purposes through such insignificant instruments.

Transition: Observe a second fact which should lead you to praise God.

II. Praise God for his condescending care for lowly mankind. (3-5)

A. Consider the awesome greatness of God's works in the heavens. (3)

1. **Argument:** The psalmist now reviews the glories of God's creative works from another perspective. Here he draws out the contrast between the awe-inspiring magnificence of the heavenly spheres and the comparative insignificance of man.
2. "your heavens" **Explanation:** The heavens are God's masterwork. They clearly reveal his glory to the observer. When the psalmist calls them "the work of your fingers," he is using an anthropomorphism to indicate two facts.
 - a. **First**, that God made the heavens with his fingers shows just how little effort it took for God to create them. They did not require a great exertion of his power. In fact, God simply spoke (**Gen 1:16**) and they came into being. **Illustration:** Think of changing a screen on your cell phone with the flick of a finger! With the mere flick of his finger God brought into existence the immeasurable and glorious universe.
 - b. **Second**, the psalmist declares the heavens to be the work of God's fingers in order to indicate the intricate workmanship and skilled craftsmanship which God displayed in his creation. **Illustration:** The heavens are like the finely stitched needlework of a skilled embroiderer who creates a magnificent tapestry of great beauty and complexity.

B. Consider God's care for mankind in light of man's comparative insignificance. (4)

1. "what is man?" **Explanation:** By comparison with the vast and magnificent heavens, man pales into insignificance. This comparison puts all the pride of man into its proper perspective. Man is but "grass" (Is. 4:6-7), a "worm" (Job 25:6), and a "clay pot" (2Cor. 4:7). The word used for man is not "Adam" (אָדָם Gen 1:26), but "Enosh" (אֱנוֹשׁ Gen 4:26), which emphasizes man's weakness, frailty, and mortality.
2. "that you are mindful of him" **Explanation:** But in spite of man's weakness and insignificance, God still "remembers" him and "takes care" for him. This is the reason for the psalmist's amazement: He considers with awe God's careful and loving provision for mankind. Man stands at the center of God's creative and redemptive purposes. This place of importance, however, is not due to man's greatness, but to God's!
3. **Illustration:** During the Middle Ages, most people believed that the earth was the center of the universe and that the sun, stars, and planets all revolved around it. Then Galileo invented a telescope and demonstrated scientifically and mathematically that the sun was the center of our planetary system. Eventually it was further proven that the sun itself is just one star among millions of other stars that revolve around the center of our galaxy; our galaxy is just one galaxy among many millions of galaxies that move across the vastness of space. However, what is scientifically and physically false is nevertheless theologically true. Puny mankind placed on this tiny speck of dust we call planet earth is, in fact, the center of all of God's creative acts and purposes!
4. **Argument:** God's care for man is founded in the greatness of his love and grace. Thus we see here the two canvases upon which God paints his glory: (1) the canvas of God's

works of creation and (2) the canvas of God's works of grace. The glories of God's grace far outshine the glories of his physical creation.

- a. God's grace is demonstrated by his loving provision for all of man's needs. "He sends his rain on the just and on the unjust" (cp. Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17). This is what theologians call "common grace", because all men share alike in its benefits.
- b. God's grace is demonstrated by his stooping to fellowship with lowly man. Cp. **Is. 57:15**. This is the grace of God's condescension, by which he stoops down to man in his lowliness and enters into a personal relationship with him.
- c. God's grace is demonstrated by his sacrificial provision of redemption for sinful mankind. Cp. **Eph. 1:6-9**. Although this grace is available to all, only those who exercise faith in God's Messiah participate in its benefits. This is God's particular grace for his saints.

C. Consider the regal dignity which mankind possesses due to God's creative purpose. (5)

1. "you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings" **Explanation:** The book of Hebrews 2:7 quotes this passage from the LXX¹ and translates it "lower than the angels." The Hebrew literally says "a little lower than God" or "a little lower than the gods" (Heb. אֱלֹהִים). As the book of Hebrews shows, "angels" is the intent of the word.
 - a. Genesis does not describe the creation of angels, but it evidently was the very first of God's creative acts, for Job 38:7 says that when God laid the foundation of the earth, all the angels sang in praise.
 - b. Angels are immortal creatures, but man is subject to decay and death. Gen 1:26, 28 describe man's creation in the image of God. This fact invests man with dignity and honor as one reflecting the very image and glory of God. Of course, this describes man's condition before the fall. Because of sin, God's image in man has been defaced, but not destroyed. Angels are pure spirits, men are embodied spirits; in this we are "a little lower than the angels." But someday, because of Christ's death and resurrection we will gain glorified, deathless bodies, then we will be equal with the angels.
2. **Argument:** This statement of the psalmist views man from the perspective of creation and does not take notice of his fall into sin. At creation, God entrusted the rule of all creation to mankind; theologians call this the "Creation Mandate." The psalmist here draws attention to two contrasting facts about man: (1) Man is small, weak, and insignificant in comparison to other elements of God's creation and (2) man was invested by God with dignity and honor as his representative ruler over the whole Creation. However, sin has caused a serious change in man's relation to creation.
 - a. Man's innate weakness has been accentuated by his fall in sin. He is now not only weak, but *sinfully* weak. Furthermore, his honor and dignity has been degraded by sin; he is no longer master of creation under God, but is a slave to his own sinfulness and to sin's consequences: death. He is under the domination of Satan, who has usurped authority over this world.
 - b. Man still strives to exercise dominion over creation. This explains mankind's drive to explore, understand, and master his environment. Man demonstrates his dominion over creation today by his attempts to harness the power of wind, sun, and the atom; in launching spacecraft to explore our solar system and submarines into the depths of the sea; and in his use of plants and animals for food, agriculture, and medicine.

¹ Greek Septuagint translation version of the OT.

III. Praise God for restoring mankind's lost dominion in Christ! (6-9)

A. Recognize the extent of man's dominion. (6)

1. "you have given him dominion over the works of your hands" **Explanation:** The "Creation Mandate" declares God's purpose and man's destiny to rule over creation. Here the psalmist describes the extent of man's intended dominion. It is to be universal. From the psalmist's perspective, the fall of man is not in view, only his intended dominion. However, the fall of man presents a seemingly insurmountable impediment to man's actually attaining such a dominion. The solution to this unspoken difficulty is found in the person of Messiah.
2. **Argument: Hebrews 2:6-8** applies this to the incarnation of Christ. Christ took on humanity and suffered death as a vicarious sacrifice for human sin. Those who trust in Christ not only experience salvation from sin, but they are united with Christ, "the second Adam", who has become the representative head of redeemed humanity. We have become a New Creation in Christ. His victory over sin and death qualifies him to reign as God's appointed Messianic King; we share in his glory, because we are united with him. Thus, only Christ can truly fulfill the terms of this Creation Mandate. The title "son of man" (v.4) is Messianic. Christ's use of the title "Son of Man" for himself is not only based on Daniel 7:13, but also on Psalm 8:4!

B. Recognize the subjects of man's dominion. (7-8)

1. "all sheep..." **Explanation:** The listing of those placed under man's dominion is taken from the Genesis account (1:26, 28). All animate creation is under man's rule; this includes domesticated animals, wild animals, birds, fish, and sea creatures. Furthermore, it includes all of the inanimate creation ("the works of your hands", v. 4).
2. **Argument:** In the NT, Paul shows that God's purpose for man to rule is fulfilled in the man Jesus Christ (1Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22). In Christ we not only gain what we lost by sin, but we gain much more!

C. Recognize the consequence of man's dominion. (9)

1. **Explanation:** The repetition of the opening stanza reiterates the theme of praise to God for the revelation of his glory. God has revealed his glory through his works of creation and through his works of grace, *the new creation*.
2. **Argument:** Christ's dominion, by which we also rule with him, is therefore a call for us to praise God!

Conclusion:

- 1) The main point for us to take away from this psalm is that God is great and glorious, but that he graciously condescends to show his loving care to mankind. This should lead us to praise God!
- 2) The second point for us to take away is that man of himself is weak, puny, and insignificant, especially in comparison with the great works of God in Creation. Yet God has invested mankind with a special dignity and honor by making him the regal ruler of all Creation. This fact magnifies the greatness of man's sin. God gave man much, but like Satan, he wanted more! Because of sin, man has lost his dominion and become a slave to sin and death.
- 3) The third fact we must consider in this Psalm is that God has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to become a man in weakness and lowliness, who was crucified on a cruel cross. He

suffered death as a substitutionary sacrifice from man's sin. He became the second Adam, the head of God's new creation and the representative leader of redeemed humanity. All that man lost through the fall, he has regained in Christ and much more. Because we are united with Christ through faith, we will share in his dominion over this earth.