

When we look at the verses provided for our worship today, we should see the fingerprints of 2 writers who are experiencing pure adoration and worship for God as they reflect on what a gift life is, to the human!

David says in Psalm 8 – How majestic is your name in all the earth! – and - You God, have made us a little lower than God and crowned us with glory and honor. Paul says - We have peace with God, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand.

These are not simple thoughts or flippant words but assertions born out of the experiences of lives lived without God and then being blessed with God and knowing true spiritual gifts as a part of the lived experience of life.

These are examples of praise that comes from within. Think of how you feel when you are in awe of a great natural wonder; a glorious sunrise, the quiet look into the eyes of one you love so very much, the burst of joy at seeing an old dear friend unexpectedly.

When my kids were small, maybe 3 or 4, I used to use them as arrows to launch at their mom. It was a win, win, win.

I'd whisper into my son's ear and say "go give mom a big hug and tell her you love her". They would run over so excitedly and hug her legs and say those words and everyone would smile. Worthy of praise – that feeling. That's the same kind of overwhelming feeling of gratefulness that we would like to feel in our lives when we take stock of the blessings in our lives.

In the past few weeks, we have looked at what it is to be doing God's work as the church on earth. Not God doing our work but we working for God.

We also looked at what it means to accept being transformed and empowered to do God's work because it has been given to us to do and then doing that work confidently and with authority.

We're going to continue along these lines by considering that we are blessed in the context of living the Christian life together; living a life that is transformed.

The life as a church that does God's work as a church, (as the opening sentences remind us), that we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and because of that - individually members one of another. It takes a village.

And, I want us to recognize from the outset that the examples of Paul from our first reading this morning and then of David, which I am about to read, are for the real world. They are ideas and experiences that don't happen in an idealized vacuum. When Paul reminds us that we can rejoice even when we run into problems and trials, as he puts it, that the rejoicing comes because we are a people sharing in God's glory. In good times and in struggle, we as a Christian family, continue to develop in life through God.

We endure, we build Godly character, and we gain confidence in the blessings of our faith because we have a God-relationship.

This I hope you will also see in the written words from King David in Psalm 8.

### Psalm 8

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory in the heavens.

2 Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

4 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

5 You have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.

6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

7 all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,

8 the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

9 Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### The word of the Lord

If you go back to Psalms 3-7, also written by David, you will find that they are passages of lament and suffering and requests for vengeance. They recall the difficulty of living in a frightening and bloodthirsty world where enemies abound. And then suddenly Psalm 8 appears, a Psalm of praise.

“How majestic is your name in all the earth”, David writes. What a change.

What do we make of the human creature David has been writing about who endures suffering but is still made just a little lower than God and crowned with Glory and honor?

The movement from suffering to honor and glory suggests that the two are not opposed but instead, that being created in God's image somehow includes the life found in suffering but with God still in union with mankind. The royalty of man is not diminished by the suffering but is instead integral to it. <sup>1</sup>

Still, how can God, whose glory is set "above the heavens" and whose fingers establish the moon and the stars be actually "mindful of humanity"?<sup>2</sup>

That question was in the minds of some people in 1969 because Psalm 8 can actually be found both here and on the moon! The Apollo 11 landing team of Neil Armstrong and "Buzz" Aldrin left a silicon disk on the surface of the moon containing messages from 73 nations, including the Vatican, which offered the text of this Psalm because it highlights the cosmic sovereignty of God and the exalted status of the human creature.<sup>3</sup>

It was our spiritual introduction to the stars!

David didn't know it then but we do know it now that we would be God's plan, Jesus hands on earth. We are the plan but, do we own it?

Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is the "reflection of God's glory" and bears the "exact imprint of God's very being." As imitators of Christ, we were then created to bear that exact God-imprint – in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

So, do we hold a sense of obligation to worship, to serve, and to live a life more and more in Christ as we move forward in our lives?

And this is the problem:

To fail to take seriously the central importance of humanity in God's plan for creation is to abdicate the God-given responsibility to be partners with God in caring for the earth and all these people on it. And given the responsibility to do

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<sup>1</sup> David Gambrell, editor, Psalm 8 commentary, Year C, Vol 2, Trinity Sunday, WJK Press, 29-30

<sup>2</sup> Bonnie Pattison, ED David Lyon Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, Feasting on the Word. Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year C, vol. 2 (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), *Theological Perspective*, 32

<sup>3</sup> J. Clinton McCann Jr. Volume IV, The New Interpreters Bible, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 711.

<sup>4</sup> Feasting on the Word, *Theological Perspective* 34

God's will and to be God's church, the very essence of Jesus on earth, can we afford to fail to do our best?

These are heady questions! This seems like a big responsibility. Sometimes we need to just sit back and take it all in perspective.

Like I told the kids, both Paul and David have looked back at their lives and the world around them and realized that even in times of great struggle God has been with them. They were never alone and neither are we. Not only had God been with them in their struggles, but they had also grown and blessed in the struggle. God had given them a special standing because of, and as a direct result of, their faith and sticking with God through thick and thin.

The faith displayed by David and later explained by Paul, confirmed the status of royalty that David had asked about. But, the affirmation of humanity's Royal status and dominion can only be understood within the context of God's reign over everything.<sup>5</sup> It is good to remember that it's really not about us.

God uses the weak and seemingly insignificant human creature as a partner in caring for a creation that is constantly threatened by its enemy, chaos. The character of God's sovereignty cannot be understood apart from the knowledge that God does choose to be mindful and to care for humanity.<sup>6</sup>

Psalm 8 can also be used or read backward and often is, giving intent and credit where it doesn't belong. This is the kind of stuff that shows up on greeting cards and such.

Look at what God has made! How awesome are earth and stars! The failure of course is giving credit to the made, but not to the maker.

And if you emphasize that God has made man a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor and made us rulers over the works of God's hands, again we focus on the authority of mankind and miss the grandeur of the plan God has put in motion and the praise that should emit from us to God in that experience.<sup>7</sup>

The God of Psalm 3-7 would lead us to believe that all life is tragic. Much of the Old Testament looks through the lens of a continuing failed relationship between a

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Walker, *Feasting on the Word, Exegetical Perspective*, 37

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> James Gertmenian, *Feasting on the Word, Homiletical Perspective*, 35

loving God and a created and chosen but sinful people who could never seem to get their relationship with God right. We however have the blessings of being on the other side of God doubling down on the pledge to love the Lord's own creation, to save us from our own faults and failures through Christ and the Holy Spirit and to give reason for our blessings, for God being mindful of us.

The older generation in the church seems to always be the ones who get this connection. If I explain that we are God's plan and that by carry out that plan we receive blessings in our own lives, they just nod in agreement. If you want to see how to live a Godly life, look to the elder statesmen and women of the church. They have cultivated a lifetime of learning into a rich and full relationship between themselves and God. Ask around, I think you'll find this to be true.

For the rest of us, I have a phrase. Life is long but time is short. If you find yourself thinking you will get a strong relationship with God someday, and reap the blessings of such a relationship someday – well, then time is short. Every day is one in a long stream of somedays.

You know the song There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place? By waiting for someday to be in God's blessings you are missing out on that Sweet, sweet, spirit in your life, because, the blessings of heaven, of a close relationship with a loving creator are for the taking and enjoyment right now.

This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 5 in our Epistle scripture today. Because of Faith in Jesus, we have – in the present tense – peace with God and life inside the experience of undeserved privilege, where we now stand. Eternal life begins now. And for this piece of our eternal life, whatever our place or situation is in life, whatever our circumstance, we can be assured that God is here, giving special honor and freedom - to us – in it, right now.<sup>8</sup>

Psalm 8 and Romans 5 work together in the nitty gritty parts of a hard life. They offer assurance and example for us that whatever we go through in life, even when life aint perfect, still makes a blessed life, as long as we are living inside of this story.

Because, this life that we have been handed, it is not without purpose.

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<sup>8</sup> Linda Thomas, Feasting on the Word, *Theological Perspective*, 40.

That purpose, being God's hands on earth, is defined by this book and supported by the words written to us as both an instruction manual and a love letter.

Key to being effective in the work of God, I believe, is understanding that God's got our backs in doing the Lord's holy work. In preparation for this Trinity Sunday, I wanted to find some specific instances in our Bible that point to what God gives us and how that offers us confidence and authority for our work. A few examples from God's letter to us. Words meant for us -

### **What does God have to do with our confidence and authority?**

Psalm 139: 13-14 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

### **What does the Son have to do with our confidence and authority?**

Ephesians 3:12 - In Jesus and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

2 Cor 12:9 But Jesus said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

### **What does the Spirit have to do with our confidence and authority?**

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

<sup>21</sup> Now it is God who makes us stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, <sup>22</sup> set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

**1 Cor 2:3-5** **3** I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. **4** My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, **5** so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

God has made us a little lower than God in order to care for all things under heaven.<sup>9</sup> Our task and our blessing. God is mindful of us because in Jesus took our sin upon him he left us with the task of being his church on earth, for the whole earth. And when we do God's work, we receive the blessings of heaven here and now.

I did a funeral service for a Christian man yesterday. He served his fellow man throughout his entire life. He was the hands of God in the blessings of Jesus with the work of the spirit for all those around him. It seemed that everything he did was successful because he did it in God's intent.

What is mankind that God is mindful of us? We are God's children, God's church, God's plan, God's hands. May we do God's work with joy and reap the blessings and rewards of heaven around us in our days. Right Now.  
Amen

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<sup>9</sup> James Mctyre, Feasting on the Word, *Pastoral Perspective*, 36