

Feb 13th: Psalm 8 Meaningful Praise

Ps 8 is one of those really special and beautiful psalms of David. Its words are so simple and direct that even a child can appreciate its message yet the depth of thought within it stirs the hearts of the greatest and most wise whenever it is read. All of us I'm sure, can imagine being with David watching over his sheep on a clear starlit night far from the villages that surrounded Bethlehem. We sense what he feels as in a reflective moment he looks up towards the heavens and is suddenly and obviously filled with immense awe at all he sees. The beauty and extent of the stars and the moon portrayed in all their splendor before him makes him aware of how tiny he is in the whole scheme of things, and how great is the God whose work is displayed.

And he bursts out with such an expression of praise as he cries out, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth." It is not so much a conscious thought as an automatic reaction of the heart.

Too often today on those reality TV shows where a person is brought face to face with a house that has been secretly decorated, we hear them automatically responding with the phrase, "O my God". For most it seems to mean absolutely nothing. Yet here we find David saying, "O my God how majestic is Thy name", and it is full of meaning.

And maybe you too can think back to times like that when you were also overwhelmed by the wonder of God's creation, or excited by what God had done, and from deep within, you too have experienced this instinctive urge to break forth in praise??

But David was not just content to express his praise with that one statement. He needed also to work through in his mind what it really was that made the Name of Almighty God so majestic.

Almighty God whom he, a mere mortal, could address as our God. Almighty God who in every revelation of Himself has continuously shown Himself as excellent in every way. Almighty God whose power and presence is constantly obvious to all who take time to look—atheist or believer—for nothing changes the reality of His presence and power in His created universe.

C.H.Spurgeon put it so beautifully in his commentary on this psalm when he wrote¹p79...Treasury of David volume 1.

There is no place where God is not. Travel through the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side rising like battlements of heaven till you can see but a strip of the blue sky far overhead; you may be the only traveler who has passed through that glen; the bird may start up affrighted, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of human foot; but God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flowers with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean, where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uppermost parts of the sea, but God is there.

And it seems that when David began to think about the things that made God's Name so majestic the first most glorious fact regarded the praise of children:

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

David discovered that God is so secure in His greatness and power that He needs no other greater power to praise Him. Indeed there is no power greater than God. He has no fear of criticism. No fear of the vengeful attacks on Him of man or spirit or supernatural force. So He has placed in the pure hearts of children this simple faith that sees Him, that delights to praise Him, where adults—whose minds are clouded by presumption, pride, and sin—don't.

Then the second glorious thing David couldn't fail to mention was the testimony of the heavens

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

That was what had caught David's attention at the very beginning. It was the glory that God had set above the heavens that had made David declare the majesty associated with the name of God. That's why so many call this Psalm 'The song of the Astrologer'.

Indeed, it may well have been that David, thousands of years ago and way before all the awareness came that we have, of the solar system, had a foreknowledge of the minuteness of our earth within this truly great universe that God has made and controls.

For from thinking about the stars he moves directly to voice his amazement at the way Almighty God cares for and has a plan for humankind whom He has created:- v4

***what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?***

This verse is the key verse in the Psalm. It is here that David discovers the major reason to praise Almighty God.

One can look at all the natural beauties of creation and be amazed. Can consider the immensity of the universe and be impressed. But when one stops and looks at humankind one realizes that we are the pinnacle of God's creative powers. And when we add to that the fact that Almighty God has set us in a position just a little lower than the angels; has crowned us with glory and honour; has entrusted to humankind authority over all things on this earth that God had first made; then can we be any less than astounded at the Majestic God we worship?

Now that may well have been as far as David could go in his thinking. He obviously had a knowledge of the book of Genesis and the creation story for what he says about the authority that God has given man is the same as what we find in Genesis 1:26.

Psalm 8: 6-8

You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:
⁷ all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

That such an Almighty God would treat human beings with such favour and give them such power was enough to fill David's heart with praise and passion. That the Lord of all the Universe could be mindful of him; could care for him absolutely blew his mind. And from such he repeats yet again his opening statement with renewed fervor:- v9

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

But of course we have so much more knowledge about the way God cares for us than David had because we live in the age of Grace. Unbeknown to David the Holy Spirit was using his simple hymn of praise to proclaim a prophecy of the One who would enter this world some 900 years after David wrote, and who being God would become a man.

I'm sure the Holy Spirit had a little chuckle as he saw David getting so excited as he thought about God caring for mere human beings, because the Holy Spirit knew what God had planned to do for us through God the Son. That at the time of David God's best for the world was still to come.

And it was several centuries later, after the birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus that the author of the book of Hebrews looked back on what David wrote and said this: Hebrews 2:5-9

⁵ It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. ⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

"What is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
⁷ You made him a little^[a] lower than the angels;
you crowned him with glory and honor
⁸ and put everything under his feet."^[b]

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and

honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

David had great reason to praise God. To declare to others how majestic is God's Name in all the earth, but we who know Him as our Saviour and Redeemer have so much more.

And our worship is not just to be a few songs sung on a Sunday. To be meaningful....to express the tremendous gratitude we have for One who being God laid down His life for us....it needs to be a life of praise and of obedience lived out before others, so that they too may hear of the great God who loves them. Meaningful worship must affect every part of our lives. Our words, our attitudes, and especially our thankfulness.

I read this week a story that was part of a sermon on worship and it challenged me. It told of this one family where a father opened in prayer at every mealtime, thanking God for all His blessings. Immediately after prayer, as was his habit, he began to complain: about the poor quality of the meat on his plate, the size of the eggs, the high interest rates, the soft potatoes, the poor wage he was making, the bitterness of the coffee, the outrageous prices one had to pay.

One day his little daughter set him straight. "Daddy," she said, "does God hear you when you thank Him for all His blessings?" With confidence he replied, "Yes dear, He does." "Daddy," she continued, "does God also hear you when you complain about the meat and potatoes?" A little hesitantly he replied, "Yes, He hears that too." "Daddy," she said again, "which does God believe?"

I get the feeling that David's worship which arose out of the knowledge he had was real and meaningful in the sight of God. May we seek daily to make our worship meaningful to God too.