

The Excellency of Jehovah's Name!

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Bible Text: Psalm 8

Preached on: Sunday, October 8, 2006

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The portion of God's Word that we would like to read this afternoon you can find in the book of Psalms, Psalm chapter eight after which we will make confession with the Church of all ages according to the apostles' creed.

Psalm eight.

O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!¹

Thus far God's holy and infallible Word.

...together for a bit and he said he felt quite down. A patient that he had been working with had passed on and they had much communion with one another, fellowship. The many visits over the past months had produced a bond that was inseparable apart from death. The time came and his dear friend was taken away. And he said, oh, how he hated sin and the effects of sin and the curse upon this earth.

Also this week one of my sons was driving down the road and all of the sudden in front of him a woman jumped out frantic, bent over, screaming. He jumped out of his vehicle,

¹ Psalm 8:1-9.

ran to her. And she just... she was beside herself. She said, "I just hit a little boy on a skateboard."

My son ran around to the front of the vehicle. There the boy was, blood coming out of his ears, out of his eyes, out of his mouth. And he held him there and it wasn't long thereafter that he died.

Many of us see terrible things. And sometimes they seem to take the preeminence and overshadow so many other things. David had a lot of things in his life as well, a lot of things that seem to overshadow the glories and majesty of God. And yet by God's grace he was able to look above it all. He was able to yet see God's majesty, his glorious power in creation and in the universe.

And this afternoon we want to consider together with you the excellency of Jehovah's name. And may God give us to transcend above the difficulties and trials of this life and to focus on this great God that we worship in Christ Jesus.

The theme that we have written over, as I said, is the excellency of Jehovah's name. First we want to look at and consider that God makes known the excellency of his name through the creation; secondly, God employs a means of babes to refute those who refute his excellent name; and, third, we want to look at the response of the psalmist as he considers the excellency of his name.

First God makes the excellency of his name through creation; second, God employs a means of babes to refute those who refute his excellent name; and, third, the response of the psalmist as he considers the excellency of his name.

The chapter here, chapter eight, it is... has the inscription, doesn't it, "To the chief Musician upon Gittith."²

Now gittith is a musical instrument and it was shaped in the form of a wine press. It was a stringed instrument and from that instrument we get the guitar today in its different form. This instrument was taken from the Philistine worship when David had conquered them and, you see, David, took that and brought it under captivity to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He was going to take that musical instrument that the Philistines used to worship their gods and he used it to worship the Lord God of Israel because, you see, all music belongs to God. Satan has no right to music and to misuse it for his ends.

And so David, he takes it and he employs it in the worship of God. And in this sense, employs it to make known the excellency of his name. The instrument gittith was used quite often on... underneath joyous conditions, when something excellent had happened or there was something excellent to rejoice in. And so it is quite fitting that the instrument gittith is employed in the singing of this psalm.

² Psalm 8:1.

Now the psalmist here says, “ O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”³

You would think that the psalmist has a panoramic view of the whole earth. But he doesn't. He is looking at the environment around him. He is looking at nature around him and by that he gets a picture, as it were, of the whole creation, because as God takes care of that which is around him so he takes care of everything that is beyond his view. And he has no doubt in his mind that as God takes care of that which is around him, he takes care of all the earth. There is nothing outside of his providential care. He is the father of creation. He has brought it forth by the word of his mouth. He spoke all these things into being so that the things that we see are not created by the very things that we see, but rather by the very Word of God.

And he hasn't set them in motion like a clock and wound it up as if these things operate on their own accord and are left over to chance. But they all are governed by his sovereign decree which is most excellent.

“How excellent,” he said, “is thy name?”⁴

The word “how” is expressive, isn't it, of the description of the excellency of his name. There is no word, as it were, that the psalmist can grab to use to magnify the excellency of his name. It is like the word “so.”

When a little child comes up to you and says, “That was so wonderful,” you get the idea it is wonderful beyond words. And so the psalmist when he looks at the excellency of God and when he looks at creation he says, “God's name is so excellent.”

He is greatly impressed, isn't he, with the being and works of God. And we go out especially at this time of year, don't we, and we travel across the roads and we see the forests and fields teeming with beauty. These past weeks it is like a curtain has been drawn aside and an explosion of colors has come before us. And apart from grace we don't see it, but by grace we see the excellency of our God. You cannot but see it.

If you want your children, fathers and mothers, to see the excellency of God in a very tangible way, take them on a little trip out into the country. And when you look at creation don't just look at creation and end in creation, but look at creation and say to your children, “What a wonderful and excellent God that we have. Do you see that, children?”

Bring God into the picture. Don't leave him out of the picture because if you do that, then you end in worshipping the creation and not the Creator. And, see, and that is what David did. He looks at all creation. He takes it all in. He doesn't end at the creation, but he praises and glorifies the excellency of the Creator. What Creator can create something

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

like this? Who can bring forth something that like this that is before my eyes and your eyes?

None. It is beyond our imagination.

He says, “Who has set thy glory above the heavens.”⁵

Having looked at the excellency or at the excellency of his name in all the earth, seeing how God operates throughout this whole earth in wonderful beauty and harmony, he then says, “Who has set thy glory above the heavens.”⁶

He, as it were, extols the glory of God which is what? As John says, “That glory was his only begotten Son.” He has set that, that glory above the heavens so that when you and I look at the earth and when you and I look at the heavens above us there is a glory that is set far above that which is far more glorious than what we see here, far more glorious, a glory that transcends everything that we can set our eyes on.

And so when you bring your children out and you look outside and you look up into the stars maybe not so easy here in Grand Rapids with the level of smog from pollution, but when you get out into the country and you lay on the grass and you look up into the sky and you see the vastness of the universe and the stars all set in their stations and not one of them is removed out of its station—God takes care of it all—David said, “There is a glory that God has set far above that.”

And so while we look at that and wonder in amazement, he calls our attention to something much more glorious and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, far more glorious, something that will dazzle our eyes far greater than the creation. But he has given us that book of creation to teach us the glory that was revealed in Jesus Christ.

And he says, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has thou ordained [praise].”⁷

This glory, this creation that the psalmist speaks about, this beauty of it and the universe, the heavens, he says that, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained [praise].”⁸

That is quite marvelous, isn't it? He says it is not out of the mouths of intellectuals, not out of the mouths of the intelligentsia.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings...”⁹

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Psalm 8:2.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Little children are able to magnify God and to witness to the glory of his great Creator. He employs them to placard the excellency of his name. That is amazing.

Remember when Jesus was in the temple and what did the children see there? There he is. He is healing the sick and helping the needy. And the little children look upon that and they begin in one harmonious chorus to lift up their voice and sing hosannas to God. And the chief priests and the scribes are sitting on the sides and they are calling unto Jesus, “Why don’t you stop them? Don’t you hear what they are doing, what they are saying?”

And what does Jesus say? He quotes this psalm.

“Have you not heard that out of the mouths and babes thou hast ordained praise?”

Quite often little children put us to shame. Remember that little story of the father or this grandfather who is lying on his bed and he is quite sick. And he is an Atheist. He doesn’t believe God. And above his bed there is a sign that says, “God is nowhere.”

Do you remember that? Some of you probably remember it. I remember it quite well. It is in one of the catechism books.

And his little grandchild comes in one day while he is quite sick and she looks up at the sign and she says, “God is now here.”

You see, she didn’t read it properly. But out of the mouth of a babe, God was made known to that man who had so steadfastly refused to believe that there was a God and these simple little words were words that God used powerfully to bring that man to a sense of his condition, of his state before God.

Remember, also, Saint Augustine, wasn’t he? He was indulging in sin and when he... and God was working in his heart and he was so overwhelmed by a sense of his sin, not knowing what to do and on the other side of this wall he could hear a little child saying, “Take up and read, take up and read.”

And immediately Saint Augustine takes up the Word of God and he reads it and God uses that powerfully, doesn’t it? The simple word. He used it powerfully in the heart of a rebellious man who lived a profligate lifestyle, a lifestyle of licentiousness. God used it, the simple words of a child.

I was reading not too long ago of a story of a school teacher who was teaching his Sunday school class and he was an unbeliever, obviously, from the story, because he was teaching the children about the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. And as he was teaching them he said, “Now, you know, children, this really wasn’t a miracle. What this was is that this little boy came and he shared his goods with the disciples and so Jesus as an example showed the whole crowd how that sharing is a good thing so everyone got out their lunches and shared it with everyone.”

And he sat back and he felt quite comfortable that he had proved the point that it wasn't a miracle. And a little boy at the end raised his hand and he said, "What about the 12 baskets of fragments? Where did they come from?"

And the man was silent. He didn't know how to answer him.

You see, that is what is missing today in the church, a simple child like faith that takes hold of the Word of God as it is and presents it in a simple fashion before the people, not trying to dress it up, not trying to make it in their own minds much more than what it is, but simply preaching the pure simple Word of God.

The apostle Paul says much the same thing, doesn't he, in his opening words in 1 Corinthians. He declares that God has deliberately designed life in a certain sense that way, that God has chosen the weak, the frail things of this earth to put to naught those who would come up against the Word of God.

And, quite frankly, it is because children have a sense or a level of humility that is quite often missing in older people.

Pride, if not stemmed grows harder and deeper every day.

Now the psalmist said that this is not the only mark of the greatness of God.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."¹⁰

He raises them up to still and to quiet the voices of those who would come up against the Word of God. That is amazing. And that is why it is so important for you and me, you see, to take our children and instruct our children, because God can use them in a powerful way as simple as it may be.

And Jesus raises his voice, doesn't he, in thankfulness in Matthew 11 saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and," he says, "hast revealed them unto babes."¹¹

I often think of an infidel who was lecturing against God. And he was lecturing against God saying, "There is no God." And an old man with child like faith in the back of the church raised his hand and said, "Sir, the next time that you would say there is no God, would you mind adding, 'As far as you know'?"

You see, with keen insight he had put his finger upon the logical fallacy of that lecturer. The lecturer, you see, was trying to defend a negative absolute and that is absolutely impossible to do. You can't. No one can ever prove that there is no God. You can't. Yet

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Matthew 11:25.

this uneducated person saw the error and put his finger right on it. And what he was saying is, “You are limited by your own knowledge and you are speaking out of utter ignorance.”

God often uses children to teach truths that adults have a hard time grasping.

“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.”¹²

Now the psalmist goes on further, doesn’t he, and says:

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?¹³

You see, what happens when he looks at creation and he looks at the universe and he sees the excellency of the name of God, what does it do to him? It causes him, doesn’t it, to bow in humble adoration before the goodness, the mercy, the kindness, the grace of God, the providential care of his heavenly Father.

“When I consider thy heavens....”¹⁴

He just doesn’t look at the heavens. He sits back and he ponders them and considers them.

And he says, “When I [see]... the work of thy fingers...”¹⁵ the delicateness of God and how he places the planets in order, how he causes the earth to revolve and sets the stars in their station, the psalmist looks at that, not with a Hubble telescope, but with the naked eye. That is enough for him. He doesn’t have to, you see, beyond the moon like John Glenn or like Neil Armstrong in order to explain Psalm 8 or Psalm 29. He doesn’t need that. He can see it from where he is. And he sees the handiwork of God.

He says, “Which thou hast ordained.”¹⁶

And when he considers that he says, “What is man?”¹⁷ You and I, sinful creatures of the dust. What are we?

“And the son of man,” he says, “That though visitest him?”¹⁸

¹² Psalm 8:2.

¹³ Psalm 8:3-4.

¹⁴ Psalm 8:3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Psalm 8:4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

He looks at these galaxies, whirled in their silent courses in the deepness of space and he says, "How tremendous is the power that sustains all of that?" It is impressive to him.

Is it impressive to you when you go out and you look at creation and your eyes go up into the universe. He would look at the stars and moon. Is it impressive to you? Where does it lead you? Does it lead you to worship this great God and to say as the hymnist, "How great thou art"? Or do you just look at it for the sake of looking and that is where it ends?

Do you see how that God takes care of all this?

I know this is simple stuff. But quite often, you see, we bypass the simple things and focus on the most difficult things and we are not nearer to God at all. The saints, if you read their writings, the ancient church, if you read their writings and what little they knew concerning theology, had a closer walk of life before God than many do today. It is not knowledge that is going to bring us closer to God necessarily. It is knowledge coupled with acknowledgement.

And that is what the psalmist does. He gains his knowledge and he acknowledges God. And he is humbled. What is man that this great God of the universe who created the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that therein is, should look down upon man, the son of man and visit him, visit him? That is remarkable that this great God visits us in Jesus Christ. He is the Father of all providence through Jesus Christ and he visits us.

And the psalmist says, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels."¹⁹

In the Hebrew it is, "Thou hast made him a little lower than God."

In the Septuagint it was the angels, but a little lower than God, the image bearer of God.

"...and hast crowned him with glory and honour."²⁰

Do you know what the psalmist is doing? He is looking at man after redemption, how he has crowned him with glory and honor.

He had crowed him, hadn't he, with glory and honor prior to the fall and that all things were under his feet and he had government over all the creation, but through sin, you see, we forfeited that right. And in some ways the creation is still under our feet, but, you see, the psalmist here looks beyond that. he sees more than just that.

"...and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."²¹

¹⁹ Psalm 8:4-5.

²⁰ Psalm 8:5.

²¹ Psalm 8:5-6.

Everything is put under our feet in a certain degree, in a certain sense, you see, in Christ Jesus who came and died upon the cross, the epistle of Hebrews in chapter two talks about that not all things are under his feet, not everything. There still remains things that have to be put under his feet. But most things are.

He says that, doesn't he, in Hebrews two.

He says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."²²

And he goes on to say later or earlier, "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."²³

On the one hand all things are put underneath him, but on the other hand, there are certain things that haven't been put underneath him. Death still reigns in a certain sense. It still brings down many things in this earth. Corruption still reigns.

The psalmist here, he sees beyond the present and says:

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.²⁴

All are underneath.

All these at one time were created to serve man in each capacity, everything. And through sin they no longer serve man in the capacity through which they were created, but when Christ came he came, didn't he, to reverse the curse so that these things would be used to serve man once again.

It is amazing. This creation does not work in harmony for man, but against man. But Christ came to reverse the curse. And the psalmist sees that by faith.

And that, you see, is what we are called to look upon and meditate upon when we go out into creation, not just to focus on what the creation looks like and the beauty of it, but in relation to what God had initially created it for, to serve us that we might glorify him.

When you view it, how far are your binoculars set? Are you looking beyond the present and into the future of the glory that is to be revealed of what Paul speaks in Romans eight? Because that is what the psalmist did here. He looks far beyond what is present

²² Hebrews 2:9.

²³ Hebrews 2:8.

²⁴ Psalm 8:6-8.

before his eyes and focuses on what is to be revealed as Isaiah says. The wolf and the lamb, the bear and the lion, the oxen will feed together and a little child shall lead them.

So when you travel this week at the height of the fall colors, instruct your children. Instruct your children how that Christ came and he has reversed the curse and all these things that they see, if they come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are for his glory and that God has created them for man to enjoy freely.

It is a wonderful time of year. Enjoy it. Enjoy it in Christ. He has given it to us to enjoy. True, sin has wrought havoc upon this earth. True, sin has done its damage, but you have been given different eyes, child of God. You see things differently. Go out and enjoy it. Relish it. And let it be that which motivates you to look beyond what you see now to the glory that is to be revealed, a new heavens and a new earth which is much more glorious than what your and my eyes see right now. Do that and be humbled by it, that this great God of the universe so desires that you and I would enjoy in the things that he has given us. He desires that. He does. We are not strapped to this earth in such a way that we cannot enjoy the things that God has given us. We are not. He gives us these things for us to enjoy and, in turn, worship him, to worship him.

Is that what you look at the fall colors, the universe, the creation for? When you are traveling to church this afternoon, this morning and when you come tonight and you look at the wonderful colors out there, does it lift you up to worship God? Does it?

I fear all too often that for many it doesn't. The psalmist was a wonderful naturalist in the true sense of the word. There are so many psalms that deal with creation and the beauty of it and he didn't allow sin or what sin has wrought upon this earth to blur the creation and to take away the joy that there is in the beauty and excellency of God. he didn't allow it. And we must not allow it as well.

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”²⁵

It is beyond comprehension. If we can't comprehend the beauty out there, we won't be able to comprehend the excellency of his name. It is beyond what we can. May God give us to enjoy it and enjoy it freely looking unto Jesus who has redeemed this earth and will bring it back in a new creation so wonderful and so beautiful that we will enjoy it without sin, without sorrow, but with happiness and joy. Amen.

²⁵ Psalm 8:9.