

A Little Lower than Angels

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Psalm 8

The Rev. Dr. Chris Hagen
Lake Nokomis L. Ch., Mpls

Psalm 8 is a beautiful hymn declaring the glory of every person.

It is a prayer of human dignity, of human purpose, of our place in God's creation.

This psalm is dear to me in ways I cannot adequately explain.

When I am discouraged,

in those times when I think my efforts have no effect,
when I put heart and soul into something to have it disregarded,
when all the problems of the world overwhelm,
when people disappoint,

I read this psalm to try to see humanity from God's perspective.

Turn to your bulletins and read again this psalm.

It is beautifully written to surround the pray-er with God's glory;

it begins and ends with praising God:

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

All begins with God.

This world, the heavens, all creation begins with God

and is made to glorify God.

God's glory is seen in the heavens,

stars sailing across the night sky, orderly and on time,
sun warming days and bringing life,
moon to light the way,
aurora borealis and rainbow mandala displays,
vast room of space ever increasing with our expanding knowledge
of light-year distance and novas and black holes and galaxies beyond,
angels and heavenly creatures moving about spaces we will never reach.

O Lord, how majestic are you,

how grand and great and good and glorious!

The vast heavens display your glory,

*and so do babies, cradled in arms, content and fed and cooing,
toddlers busy with blocks carefree singing nursery rhymes and Jesus Loves Me,
children chasing dandelion tufts squealing joy,*

these declare God's glory,

are the sound of heavenly praise!

Children are the sound of God!

Cheerful children playing is the music of heaven!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants

you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

A baby asleep in arms melts hearts and calms souls.

Babies, infants, helpless and fragile,

form a *bulwark* against self-centeredness, despair, fret,
silencing those voices that dredge up past sins bent on shame.

Cradling babies breaks through dwelling on self

and give us pause to marvel at this extraordinary creation
of puckered lips, soft skin, tiny fingers, restful eyes.

When I consider the miracle of birth, the miracle brought alive as infants,

when I sit on park benches to gaze in awe at the wonderful beings of children,

when I ponder how their bones were built,
muscles and brain and skin shaped,
factories of chemicals flowing through blood,
all organized, synchronized, harmonized,

what am I before this miracle?
 what can I do to make even small dent of significance?
 who am I before the miracles and majesties of all creation?
*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
 the moon and the stars that you have established;
 what are humans that you are mindful of them,
 mortals that you care for them?*

And then those words that honor,
 God-words that give dignity, that bestow every person as precious,
*Yet you have made them a little lower than angels,
 and crowned them with glory and honor.*
 Just below the glory of angels in highest heaven!
 With God's *authority* to manage this world God has made.
*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
 you have put all things under their feet,
 all sheep and oxen,
 and also the beasts of the field,
 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
 whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

We give far too much heed to deceptions,
 mistaken voices that whisper non-truths;

the lies that say:
 my voice doesn't really matter,
 the money I give to this church doesn't do much,
 my job doesn't much matter in the great scheme of things,
 why vote?, one among millions doesn't make a difference,
 this place doesn't need my help,
 I don't want to get in the middle of things,
 politics makes me uncomfortable.

Deceptive voices denying God's honor,
 diminishing the glory God gives to you and me.

To such lies the psalm declares:
*You have given them dominion, given them rule, over the works of your hands;
 you have put all things under their feet...*

This world, its environment and creatures,
 our communities and all their citizens,
 government, businesses, associations and organizations,
 God has given over to us to manage as God would have us,
 carefully, thoughtfully, generously, graciously.

We have the power to protect or pollute this planet.
 We have the responsibility to preserve this world for generations yet to come.
 We have the position to manage creation as God wants it.
 A little less than the angels governing in heaven,
 we govern God's world on earth.

We pray
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...
 Not wishful hopes,
 but we pray conviction to do this task of bringing God's kingdom to be, now!
 We find ourselves in the middle of God's work,
 called to live and do as God would have us,
 engaged with God's Spirit to bring about
 holiness, justice, goodness, righteousness, kindness, beauty, happiness.

And so we come to what it means to know God as Holy Trinity.
 Speculation on same substance, three persons,
 why Father-Son-Holy Ghost instead of Mother-Wisdom-Nurturing Sprit,
 what does it mean to exist,
 what is being, what is community,
 such mental gymnastics detract from our place in God's world
 and our relationship to the Creator who gives us dominion of God's creation.
 I do not attempt to offer philosophic speculation on what is Holy Trinity
 or theological explanations of God's being.
 Talking *about* God
 is not the same thing as talking *with* God.
 Yet, as soon as we talk with God, pray and contemplate and listen,
 we are caught up in the Trinity.
 It's like the game Candyland.
 We can look at the colorful board and pieces, marvel at artistry,
 or, we can *play* the game and engage in God's fun!

God as Trinity, Three-in-One is about God known as *relationships*.
 Not so much the *persons* individually as it is about *relating* to one another.
 Not person, but community.
 The reality of God is seen in caring relationships.
 The evidence of God is found in the instances of
 people seeking justice for others,
 people protecting and rescuing from danger,
 people building safe neighborhoods for one another.
 God is seen in relationships and the ways we make life better for one another.
 This is what is meant by God giving to humans rule over God's creation,
 not exploitation,
 but the kind of rule that "delivers the needy,"
 "has pity on the weak,"
 and ensures "abundance of grain in the land" for all
 as insisted in Psalm 72 and throughout the Old Testament and New.¹
 As we engage in nurturing activities
 we encounter God.
 As we join with one another to accomplish something greater than ourselves
 we meet God.
 As we celebrate graduations and birthdays,
 talk over coffee after church,
 greet friends in stores,
 we share God.
 Our Lord, God Almighty, is relationship,
 the church word is Holy Trinity, but the idea of God conveyed is sharing life.
 It is this that we are crowned with glory and honor,
 that God chooses to share life and laughs and love with us, with you.
 God chooses to share life with you.
 Amen.

¹ Psalm 72:8, 12-13, 16.