

# A PEOPLE NEAR TO HIM

## (Sermon Summary)

**Reading: Psalm 148.**

### 1. What a great God!

What we learn of God in this Psalm proves to us that He is great and glorious. It is therefore to be wondered at greatly when we come to verse 14 and learn that we are a people near to Him.

In verses 1-10 we find a brief summary of some truly great things in the world of nature. Here are listed awesome phenomena and creatures. There are all kinds of things listed, some of which are not animate and some of which are not rational creatures like human beings. They all owe their existence to God who made them and established them (vv 5-6).

Verses 1-6 set out for us things that are beyond us and make us feel very small. There are the heavens (v1) and the sun and moon, and stars (v3). These are great heavenly bodies that leave us feeling very small by comparison. Angels too are vastly superior to us in power and understanding (v2). They all owe their form, their function, their beauty and all their qualities to God Himself. They should praise God for what they are. Angels can, but the sun, for example, cannot even though it, and everything else, is instructed to praise God (v5). But we are able to consider these things and offer praise to God on their behalf. For if these things are great things but actually owe their existence to God, how much greater must God Himself be? He is truly a great God.

Likewise, there are many great things on the earth that evoke our wonder and admiration. These are listed in verses 7-10. There are great sea creatures (v7) which remind us of Job facing His interrogation from the Lord (Job 41:1-11) where the Lord asks Job if he is able to tame the great sea creature, Leviathan. The answer is, of course, 'No'. Yet the Lord has this mighty creature at His command. How great then God must be! Mountains have a grandeur that makes us feel small too (v9) but God is greater than these, just as He is mightier than extreme weather events (v8). We can also see the wonder of God's creation in all the useful and beautiful things that He has made (vv 9-10).

All people, from the greatest to the most insignificant, (vv 11-12) should see all these things and praise the even greater God.

### 2. Great but near to us.

So, the question naturally arises, if God is this great, how can feeble and sinful man live alongside Him? How can there be peace between this immense and powerful God and us? Verse 14 tells us that it is possible. For in this verse, the great God calls these feeble people His people, His saints, and His children. They are His people, foreknown by Him, chosen before they were ever born, to be His own special people. They did not possess superior wisdom or knowledge but became His people solely because of His decision and choice. They are His saints, in other words, His set apart people whom He distinguished from among all the mass of humanity. They are His children, brought into near and dear relationship with Him, members of His family, and loved by Him.

We are therefore near to Him, although He is so great and powerful. Though we are so unlike Him in terms of our character and inclinations, He has decreed that we should be His people. The cross is the place where the Lord did all that we needed to make people so unlovely and not great all, to be able to be near to Him in His greatness.

So, we are near to Him by the way of sovereign choice. It is His will that we should be near to Him and there is no power that can and will stop that happening. He would have us be near to Him and so near to Him we are.

We are near to Him in His affections. He loves us dearly. It follows from this that we are also near to Him in that we are protected and kept close to Him. Nothing can take us away from Him.

We are near to Him in communion so that He is always near to us in our prayers. He will be found of us when we seek Him and is close to us in fellowship.

Finally, we will be very near to Him one day in glory. We will be where He is and dwell with Him forever.

### **3. He is near...even when He seems far away**

Sometimes, perhaps very often, He seems far from us. We do not feel that we have close fellowship to Him or that we are dearly loved by Him. We sometimes feel very ill or very tired. At other times we are in low spirits and depressed. Sometimes it is that we are growing old and cannot bring the same energy that we once brought with us and that our minds are slowing down. We also can feel far from Him because we are ashamed at how little we have accomplished for Him. We feel that we grieve Him and that we are spiritually ugly.

Yet the truth is that the relationship still stands as true and operative. We may feel far from Him, but He is not far from us. In fact, at such low times, He may be answering our prayers in such a way we will look back and realize that He was near to us and working in us all the time, even though we did not feel close to Him. Whatever our circumstances may be – whether in illness, acute trial, uncertainty or near to death - He is near to all His people and always will be.