

“How Great Thou Art”  
Psalm 8  
(Preached at Trinity, November 8, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. One of the great crimes of lost humanity is the sin of robbing God of His glory.  
Paul described it in **Romans 1**  
**Romans 1:21-23** – “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”
2. God commands, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”  
But human beings have always worshipped the things of this world, robbing God of His glory. Worse of all, we are guilty of pride of the worse sort – we desire to be enthroned as gods.  
**Acts 12:21-23** – “And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. <sup>22</sup> And the people gave a shout, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* <sup>23</sup> And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”
3. One of the marks of a Christian is meekness and humility.  
**Matthew 5:5** – “Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”  
But we are still plagued by pride and warned to be on guard.  
**1 Peter 5:5-6** – “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. <sup>6</sup>  
Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”
4. No other creature on earth has greater cause for humility than man. No other creature has ever rebelled against the sovereign rule of God.
5. We must continually remind ourselves of how small we are. God resists the proud. He desires to keep us small that He might be exalted. This was His teaching to Gideon:  
**Judges 7:2-3** – “And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”  
God continued reducing them until there were only 300 left.
6. The best way to keep yourself small is to continually set your eyes upon the greatness of God and the rightful place of man in God’s creation. This is what David does in **Psalm 8**.  
**Psalm 8:1** – “O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.”

7. The psalm begins with a superscription:  
 "To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David."  
 A. It is introduced as a Psalm of David.  
 B. The meaning of the word "Gittith" is uncertain. It literally refers to a wine press. It is also found in the 81<sup>st</sup> and 84<sup>th</sup> Psalms. Some believe it to be a musical instrument, perhaps a harp. Others, taking the Hebrew meaning stress that it is a Psalm of joy like that of pressing out the new wine – a Hymn of Delight. Like the other superscriptions, it is given as instruction to the chief musician.
8. David presents this Psalm in three sections and this is the way I will divide it tonight:
  - I. The surpassing greatness of God – **Verses 1-2, 9**
  - II. The stunning smallness of man – **Verses 3-4**
  - III. The surprising greatness of man – **Verses 5-8**
- I. The surpassing greatness of God – **Verses 1-2, 9**
  - A. David is overwhelmed by the surpassing greatness of God
    1. He describes it with a word that describes majesty and glory
      - a. The word translated "excellent" in the KJV refers to surpassing greatness. He is beyond compare in His excellence. Most English translations translate it "majestic," a word that describes God's high loftiness and absolute dominion
      - b. By "name" David is declaring that the fullness of the Divine essence can only be described using this idea of greatness.
    2. Seeing the surpassing greatness of God David is brought to bow in submission – He refers to God as Lord, or "Your Majesty"
      - a. Oh, Jehovah our Adonai – When we see LORD in all caps it is from the tetragrammaton – Yahweh or Jehovah. When only the first letter is capitalized in the OT it is almost always from the Hebrew Adonai. We've already seen David use it in the Psalms **Psalm 2:4** – "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."
      - b. Adonai is much like the Greek κύριος - Master  
It is a name that demands bowing in submission. It is the name used of Jesus over 700 times in the NT
    3. David describes God's greatness as surpassing heaven and earth  
**Verse 1** – "in all the earth"  
**Verse 3** – "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;"
      - a. David had been a shepherd. Shepherds spend much time in the fields at night watching over their flocks. In the total darkness the skies must have been a stunning spectacle of beauty and vastness. David was overwhelmed that God excels it all.
      - b. All things find their source in God  
He created and sustains all things in heaven and on earth. Nehemiah described it:

**Nehemiah 9:6** – “Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”

- c. God is worthy of praise from every creature from the greatest to the least. Christians are sometimes referred to as the “little ones” who continually lift up their voices in the praise of God.

B. We find the fulness of this in Christ

- 1. How excellent is the name of Christ who has been given the name that is above every name before whom every knee shall bow
- 2. Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead. He is seated on the right hand of majesty on high  
**Hebrews 1:3** – “Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
- 3. When the children praised Jesus in the Temple Jesus quoted this Psalm  
**Matthew 21:15-16** – “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, <sup>16</sup> And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?”

II. The stunning smallness of man – **Verses 3-4**

A. As David gazed into the sky he was overwhelmed at his smallness

- 1. “When I consider” – These are important things to meditate upon.  
“Thy heavens” – David recognized the rightful owner.
  - a. David saw God in everything and it drove him to worship.
  - b. And it drove him to humility.  
What is man that God would even notice us?
  - c. “Son of man” speaks to the finite nature of man beside the infinite God.
- 2. Here we are on a small planet in the midst of an immensely large universe. We must appear as a speck.
- 3. Isaiah wrote of our smallness  
**Isaiah 40:15** – “Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.”  
**Isaiah 40:17** – “All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.”  
**Isaiah 40:22-23** – “*It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: <sup>23</sup> That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.”

- B. What vanity it is for man to seek to usurp God of His glory.
1. As we rise up and boast of our greatness before God it must sound like the chirp of a cricket.
  2. We saw God's response in **Psalm 2**  
**Psalm 2:4** – “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.”
  3. We rely on God for our very existence. We are nothing and can do nothing without Him

### III. The surprising greatness of man – **Verses 5-8**

- A. There is difference of opinion as to whether this passage is referring to man in general or to Christ. It would be best to see it as both.
1. God has blessed man with His great condescending grace
  2. God created man in greatness
    - a. It would seem that the whole universe was created in relationship to earth – that it could be viewed by men upon earth.
    - b. God created man in His own image with the ability to reason and to know Him and enjoy Him
    - c. God has given man dominion over creation – great authority
    - d. In the created order, we are created just lower than the angels.
  3. But while man is a little lower than the angels in the created order it is also true the man is the highest of God's creation.
    - a. It was man that God sent His son to redeem. There was no redemption for fallen angels. Christ did not take upon Himself the form of an angel.
    - b. And are not angels sent as ministering spirits to God's redeemed?
    - c. And is there not joy among the angels when a single sinner comes to repentance?
- B. The greatness of man has been exalted in our redemption. In our redemption we have been raised up in glory
1. We have been adopted and declared to be the children of God and made a part of God's household
  2. We are united to Christ, the Son of God and have become partakers of the Divine nature.
  3. We are indwelt with His Spirit – We have become the Temple of God
- C. This passage points supremely to Christ Himself  
**Psalm 8:5** – “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.”
1. Paul quotes **Verse 6** in **Ephesians 1**  
**Ephesians 1:22-23** – “And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, <sup>23</sup> Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”
  2. The writer of Hebrews relates it to Christ  
**Hebrews 2:9** – “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.”

- a. This is true as we consider the self-emptying of Jesus leaving His throne to take upon Himself the form of fallen man
- b. This is true as we consider Him as the Suffering Servant
3. Of course, Hebrews also declares that Jesus far exceeds the angels  
**Hebrews 1:4-6** – “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”<sup>5</sup>  
 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?<sup>6</sup> And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.”
4. It is to Christ that all dominion had been given

#### Conclusion:

1. David ends the Psalm in the way he began. With marvelous praise of our infinite God. A believer cannot consider the majesty of God with falling into worship.  
 Listen to Paul:  
**Romans 11:33** – “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”
2. In our man-centered worldview this psalm brings us to our knees before God’s greatness. “What is man?”
3. May this meditation upon the greatness of God remind you of how small you are. And may your smallness humble you before God. And may this humility before God drive you to worship and obedience.