

Sermon: “Good News: God Loves Humanity In and Through His Creation”

Text: Psalm 8 Pastor Dave Sattler December 11, 2022 NSAC

Sub-Texts: Genesis 1:26-27; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 10:45; Luke 2:10-12/18-20; Hebrews 2:6-9

Sources: Bible Gateway, NIV Life Application Bible, YouVersion. Commentaries: Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Gerard H. Wilson. Books: “Favorite Psalms” by John Stott (1988). Wikipedia: *Hadad Yisi*. Images: unsplash.com & pixabay.com. Sermon: Mark Sayers (Red Church, Winter 2022). Song: “King of Kings” (Hillsong, 2019).

I. Introduction:

- Hello, everyone. I’m Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here at NSAC.
- Thank you for joining us in person and online. It’s great to be together.
- Today we continue in the long-practiced Christian tradition of Advent—anticipating the coming of our Saviour Jesus.
- **<Slide>** ILL — My wife Joanne still commemorates Advent with our grown children, putting out special chocolates each morning in the lead-up to Christmas. And there’s still much anticipation: ‘*What’s there this morning—Kinder, Twix, Lindor?*’ Now and then, I get one too!
- Doesn’t chocolate just whet your appetite for Jesus!?!
- **<Slide>** Luke Chapter 2 describes a memorable night: “*the glory of the Lord shone all around,*” and “*an angel of the Lord appeared*” and said to a group of “*terrified*” shepherds, “*I bring you **good news** of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.*” (v.9-12)
- “**Good news**”—in life, in our world, good news is often hard to come by.
- “*Of great joy*”—seems joy’s been scarce—elusive these days.
- “*For all the people*”—really?! Yes, even for you and me.
- “*He is Christ the Lord*”—the long-anticipated Messiah.
- “*You will find a baby*”—wow! Out of the majesty and expanse of the heavens He made, the Lord God Almighty appears ... as an infant!
- **<Slide>** The big idea for today, the **Good News**, is this: **God loves humanity in and through His creation.**
- So much so, the God of the Universe, the One-Above-And-Behind-It-All, steps down and becomes part of His own creation. We will explore the question: Just what sort of Being is this Who gets so intimately involved, to become for humanity, our “*Saviour?*” And, don’t we all need saving?!
- Today we look at Psalm 8, a psalm of David. From the Hebrew hymnbook, it is a vintage song of God’s greatness and humanity’s worth.

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- 1 *Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*
You have set your glory in the heavens.
- 2 *Through the praise of children and infants you have established a*
stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.
- 3 *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,*
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
- 4 *what is mankind that you are mindful of them,*
the son of man that you care for him? <Slide>
- 5 *You have made them a little lower than the angels*
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- 6 *You made them rulers over the works of your hands;*
you put everything under their feet:
- 7 *all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,*
- 8 *the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea,*
all that swim the paths of the seas.
- 9 *Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

<Prayer> “Lord, please move me out of the way. Come and speak to us by Your Spirit. We’re hungry to hear from you.”

II. Biblical Teaching: Psalm 8

1. <Slide> “Lord, Our Lord” (v.1a/9)

- Psalm 8 has a repeated verse. Did you catch it? The first and last read the same, “*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.*”
- With this line, the Psalmist moves from big to small: “*Lord*”—big ... “*our Lord*”—small.
- On the macro level, God is indeed Lord over the entire universe, and at the micro level, God is also “*our Lord*”—relational, personable, and, accessible to you and to me.
- “*How majestic is your name in all the earth!*” “*Majestic*”—impressive, dignified, magnificent, grand ... “*in all the earth*”—back to big again.
- But, not so fast. We mustn’t miss the subtle piece the psalmist slips in here, “*your name.*”
- The name of God is “*majestic in all the earth,*” not because God needs to make a name for Himself (have His name in lights), or must show off His power, or is somehow in need of an ego-rub.

- No! God's majestic name (big) permeates all of earth and heaven because God desires to be known in personal relationship by every human being (small).
- This personableness of God, it's in His very nature.
- **<Slide>** One commentator says, Q: "This is not the hidden God ... but the God who displays himself to be seen in his creation—the God who wills to be known in his majesty by human beings and creation alike."
— Wilson, p.200
- The God of the Christian Story is not some 'ivory palace prince' insulated from His kingdom and absent from the people. God's not distant, as some might think, sinister, or up to no-good chicanery. God doesn't play His cards close to His chest. No! He loves to self-reveal. God delights in making Himself, and His will, known to His creation.
- While He is above all things, God is also in creation, with us—and accessible to all humanity. The incarnation is such **Good News** precisely because Jesus becomes ... "*Immanuel, God With Us.*"

2. ***"When I consider your heavens"* (v.1b-4)**

- ILL — One can imagine how this Psalm grew from David's vision of the night skies during his days tending flocks as a shepherd.
- If you've ever camped away from the city on a clear night you can relate to that feeling of being dwarfed by the immensity of the night sky!
- When I stand before ocean vast or mountain grand, I'm confronted by God's absolute magnificence.
- In Psalm 8 David repeats this sequence: from big to small, and back to big, over and over again.
- "*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers*" (v.3a).
- It's as if the whole of unfathomable creation (big) was spun off the tips of God's fingers (small) without Him even breaking a sweat!
- APP — And it's vital we balance these two perspectives: God's bigness, His "*glory above the heavens,*" (v.1b) and God's smallness, His intimate personal "*care*" (v.4b) for all humanity.
- If, in our minds, God is *too big*, we don't press into relationship with Him and keep Him at a fearful distance. If, in our heads, God is *too small*, we won't garner Him the respect He deserves or allow Him due authority over us.

- **<Slide>** God even elicits “*praises*” from “*children and infants.*” (v.2a)
- Jesus apparently loved the Psalms—He quotes them often. Jesus references Psalm 8 in Matthew 21:12-17 when He clears out the temple:
- *Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, ‘My house will be called a ‘house of prayer,’ but you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’” The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?’” And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.*
- **<Slide>** Jesus is angry here because some religious leaders were manipulating the system to fleece worshippers for personal profit.
- In the temple, the priests and teachers object to Jesus’ healing of the sick and are put off when they hear the children worshipping loudly, ‘*Do you hear that annoying childish drivel?!*’ They cry out.
- Then, Jesus reprimands them, quoting Psalm 8:2, “*From the lips of children and infants, you Lord, have called forth your praise.*”
- The usurping religious leaders are here usurped by children!
- And this is just how God works: He flips the power structures of our world upside down!

3. **<Slide> “A little lower than the angels” (v.4-8)**

- Our psalm today presents a powerful paradox. [And you know the problem with a ‘pair-a’ docks,’ right? Where do I park my boat?!]
- On one hand, in comparison to God, His ways, and His works, humanity is absolutely insignificant. “*What is mankind that you are mindful of them?*” (v.4a)
- Yet, on the other hand, this same God has endowed women and men with dominion over His creation. “*You made them rulers over the works of your hands.*” (v.6a)
- By God’s incredible grace, He gives humanity a special job as ruler over His creation. This is part of the working out of Genesis 1:26-27.

- *Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*
- **<Slide>** ILL — Image-bearing was a common idea in the ancient world.
- Because they could not be in more than one place at a time, sovereigns would have their faces etched onto coins and their busts sculpted into stone.
- And kings and emperors would have their “likenesses” distributed throughout their vast territories in attempt to propagate their image and enhance their influence and power.
- This is the language of Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, except, in place of graven images, we have us, humans—God’s creation as bearers of His likeness.
- He is omni-present, yet still the God of the Christian Story has made humanity His image-bearers representing Him on earth.
- What a responsibility! What a privilege and high calling! Truly remarkable. And further reason for the Psalmist (and us) to worship.

III. **<Slide> Life Applications**

- Well, time now to ‘land the plane’ on a few application points.

A. **<Slide> *God’s Majesty: Big or small God is in it all!*** **(Psalm 8:1a & 9 / 1 Kings 19:11-13)**

- *“Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (8:1a/9).*
- Often God moves, in ways, that, at the time, seem or feel, very small.
- The Bible offers an example of this with the prophet Elijah, who finds himself in a rough spot. The Israelites have rejected God, torn down their altars and put their prophets to death.
- Now they want to kill Elijah too.
- 1 Kings 19:11-13 tells what happens next: *The Lord said [to Elijah], “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

- In the midst of an extremely tense situation, God, rather surprisingly, communicates His presence to Elijah ... through a “*gentle whisper*.”
- APP — Often, moments that seemed insignificant at the time, when we look back, we see how those events shaped our lives in big and impactful ways. And this is God at work too!
- Not that it’s wrong to pray big prayers—to ask God to move mountains and such. We are always invited to pray big. But not at the expense of asking God to guide the little things—or overlooking His presence in the everyday, simple decisions of our lives.
- **<Slide>** ILL — I think of times in my life ... that on the surface seemed rather small, but God was clearly present in them:
- That day in the cafeteria at Bible College, when I struck up a conversation with a girl who would later become my wife—super scary, but somehow God gave me the courage!
- That thin call to leave Surrey and come to pastor at North Shore Alliance—one morning while reading Hebrews 11, that sense in my gut, when everything inside of me said ‘no,’ but God quietly whispered ‘yes, go.’
- If we only ask Him for the big stuff: ‘*God, heal me now.*’ ‘*God, get me out of this situation.*’ ‘*God, write Your wisdom in the clouds for me,*’ we may miss God’s “*majesty*” in the small things, His loving whispering presence in our lives, His call to simple one-foot-in-front-of-the-other obedience. God works in those ways too!
- We are encouraged to have an ear for God even in His small gentle whispers.

B. <Slide> *Humanity’s Purpose: I will be happy when my life most reflects God’s glory. (Psalm 8:6 / Genesis 1:27)*

- Humanity is the only creation that God makes “*in his own image*” (Genesis 1:27). And God assures the worth of humanity at the top of His creation, making us “*rulers over the works of [His] hands.*” (8:6)
- The Christian Story suggests something grand about the human experience: Every life matters; every person has eternal purpose.

- APP — Maybe you find yourself in church today battling feelings of insignificance.
- Lately I've witnessed a certain fog settling over our world.
- Perhaps due to rising inflation, climate change, the effects of a global pandemic, hints of despair and hopelessness about the future seem to be hanging in the air more than ever.
- Perhaps you're struggling with direction in your life, lacking motivation or purpose, dealing with anxiety, questioning your own self-worth.
- Christianity declares the dignity and worth of every human.
- Our lives are not random. When culture pressures you to *'look inside yourself'* for solutions, the Christian Story says our identity is not self-determined; our significance, our purpose, our life-direction does not come from inside, it comes instead from our beautiful Creator, Who loves us, identifies with us, and has a vital life-purpose set out for us.
- **<Slide>** APP/ILL — I don't know about you, but I suck up a lot of heart and brain energy working through scenarios: *'I will be happy when ... I will be happy when have that thing I've been hoping and saving for, I will be happy when my accomplishments get me further up the ladder (or at least past that guy). I will be happy when I find the perfect partner, I will be happy when I go on that next adventure, I will be happy when I discover who I really am do the real me really well. I will be happy when ...'*
- Problem is: Life is not designed, primarily, around our wants or our desires. Our wants and desires can't always be trusted.
- Human beings are the visible representation of the image and likeness of the Invisible King. And, we are invited to participate in God's mission of loving care and stewardship for all He has made.
- How we talk, how we act, how we treat God's creation, how we spend our time, how we spend our money, what we watch, how we dress, how we work, how we party, how we treat other people really matters.
- Life, work, recreation, relationships that puts God first are best for us.
- We can only be truly happy **when our lives most reflect God's glory**. That is what we've been made for.

C. <Slide> God's Grace: We are invited to encounter the God Who comes and visits us. (Psalm 8:4 / Luke 2:16-20 / Mark 10:45 / Hebrews 2:6-9)

- “[O Lord] what is mankind that you are mindful of them, the son of man that you care for him?” (8:4)
- Entirely undeserved and unexpected. God’s amazing grace poured out in Jesus is History’s Game-Changer. Because of His amazing grace, God comes down and visits us. God is not limited to human form but humbles Himself in the form of God the Son Jesus **so that we may know Him** as fully as humanly possible. — Wilson, p.214
- To span the chasm between Holy God and His broken creation, Jesus comes. And Jesus is God’s re-creation plan for us—and all the world.
- APP — These have been some rough years for our world, for NSAC, for people of faith. Coming out of CoVID, I believe many of us are in need of spiritual renewal—a re-creation.
- And this is exactly what God offers through relationship with Jesus.
- Perhaps you’ve been losing interest in your faith, or loved ones have turned against you because of it, or you’ve become hardened, cynical about God and His church (*‘Christians and churches have done so much bad in the world, I think I’m out.’*)
- Or, something big and painful has happened to you and you’re having serious doubts and want to keep your distance. You feel far from God.
- **<Slide>** Here’s the point: there is no issue or problem too big for God to handle. There is no relational chasm God cannot span.
- When we encounter the God of grace, when we engage with Jesus in real life, He grows within us a genuine faith that sustains when hard times hit our lives—and they will.
- The God of the Christian Story is not merely a force, or a set of rules, or a deity to be appeased, He’s a living, dying, rising-again Saviour—full of grace and mercy for you. And Jesus longs for you to reach out to Him.
- **<Slide>** I love how God usurps the power-structures of the Roman world by coming as a baby! And, on a Bethlehem night, when God lights up the heavens to rock their evening, a group of lowly shepherds working the midnight shift are invited to be the Christ-child’s first visitors!

- Cf. Luke 2:16-20 tells the story: *“So [the shepherds] hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”*
- The shepherds’ lives are transformed by their **encounter** with Jesus.
- **<Slide>** It’s interesting how the term “Son of Man” from Psalm 8 is one of the names Jesus uses for Himself in the New Testament.
- In Mark 10:45 it says, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*
- Jesus chooses to intimately identify with the fragile weakness of human beings and becomes a “suffering servant” in order to save us.
- Jesus is fully human so He can represent us, all humanity, on the cross.
- And, Jesus is fully God so He can be the perfect sacrifice to pay for all the sins of humanity on the cross.
- **<Slide>** Hebrews 2:6-9 says: *But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.” In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*
- Written hundreds of years after Psalm 8 these verses acknowledge that, even with humans ruling the world, all is not well. Boy do we know it!
- Instead, the writer of Hebrews invites us to “see Jesus” and His death as God’s beautiful gift of grace to rescue humanity. Jesus suffered through death and came out the other side—and makes the way for salvation and eternal life for all who put their trust in Him. Amen.

IV. <Slide> Communion Instructions

- As we move into communion, I invite the worship team and communion servers to come and take their places.
- If you have put your faith in Jesus as your Saviour, you are invited to participate in communion. In a moment you can come forward or in the balcony go to the back. Please hold your hands out and the server will put a piece of bread in your hands and say, *“this is the Body of Christ given for you.”*
- Then, you can take that bread and dip it into the cup (not too deep) and your server will say, *“this is the Blood of Christ shed for you.”*
- And then you can then eat the bread.
- If you need gluten-free options, they are here at the cross.
- Immediately following communion, during the songs, if there is something on your heart you would like prayer for, our team members will be available: George & Ali by the exit, Cathy & Brenda by the big window in the balcony // Dave & Marijke by the exit, Sofia & Marjan by the big window in the balcony.
- <Slide> In a few minutes, we will sing the song “King of Kings.” I love the opening lyric, Q: *“In the darkness we were waiting, without hope and without light. Till from heaven (Jesus) you came running, there was mercy in your eyes.”* — King of Kings, Hillsong (2019)
- In the mercy and grace of God, Jesus, “Immanuel, God With Us” the “Son of Man” lovingly gave His life as a “ransom” for us.
- This is what we celebrate in communion.
- Please come now and we will partake together.