

Singing the Solution

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[0 : 00] Great, please have a seat. I'm just going to rescue the clicker from Rich, who I think has got it. Thanks very much. So hopefully, kids, you're armed with something to do.

Listen if you can. Do that if it helps you, absolutely. If you've been with us regularly on a Sunday morning, you'll know that we're going through the Psalms together. And today we're thinking about Psalm 8, as we've been doing.

You didn't get a sheet, Cillian. Stick a hand up, I'm sure someone will give you one. Don't worry. I just want us to think about really one simple question today. And it's this. What are we?

What are we? What makes us what we are? What is it that is unique to humanity and also universal about humanity? What are we?

What makes us us? That's really the question that verse 4 asks. Because if you've got your Bible in front of you, I'd encourage you to pick it up just so you can follow along. Psalm 8 verse 4 says, What is mankind that you are mindful of them?

[1 : 09] Speaking to God. What is mankind? So, when I was thinking about how to talk about this today, I came across a few quotes which I'm going to share with you here from various people.

Here's one from Jim Carrey, who is an actor in case you don't know. I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so that they can see it's not the answer. Here's another one.

I hate tennis. I hate it, hate it with a dark and secret passion and always have. Grand Slam tennis champion Andre Agassi. I simply got so lost.

My safety was at risk as well as a team medal. You probably know the name of Simone Biles best of all of those. Champion Olympic gymnast. I think the most decorated gymnast of all time on why she stopped.

So, whatever we are, it's not what we do, is it? It's not what we achieve, either.

[2 : 15] And if we define ourselves by our own choices, I'm going to be this when I grow up. I'm going to do that. I'm going to be single. No, I'm going to be in a relationship. I want children. I don't want children. Whatever it is, if we try to define ourselves by our own choices, that doesn't work either.

We're learning. Here's what God tells us in the Bible that we are. Just looking at the first bar there. We are, like Lucy prayed just a moment ago, loved.

Look at verse 4. What is mankind that you are mindful of them? Human beings that you care for them. We are loved. Not because we're great and good.

That's pretty clear from the psalm, isn't it? But because he is great and good. We are loved. We are loved. And verse 5. Keep reading. We are made. You have made them.

That's us. We're not self-made. We're not self-defined. We don't self-identify. Actually, God made us.

[3 : 20] And finally, the rest of the psalm, really, up until verse 9. God tells us that we are gifted with a place and a purpose in this world.

We're God's caretakers. We're a little lower than him. We're not divine. But we're higher than everything else. So we are loved, we are made, and we are gifted with a place and a purpose. And in making us like that, in making us what we are, God has at the same time given us each dignity and meaning and value and purpose.

By making us like that. Everybody, child, adult, lowest, highest, all of us have that.

That is what we are. And do you know what? Being a disciple of Jesus, God's son, one with him, is simply really living in the light of that truth.

[4 : 26] Living in the light of the fact that we are loved and made and gifted by God. And following him offers us a love from God, like we've seen here, that is unparalleled.

There is nothing like being loved by your creator. And it gives us a freedom. It gives us a freedom from being judged by anyone else other than the one who made us. That's a suit of armour for Monday morning, isn't it?

When we go into the world. So here's a question for you as you sit here this morning. Do you have such a clear and positive and universal and unique sense of what you are?

Of what makes you you? Do you? So we are loved, made and gifted. But we're also bookended by God's greatness.

We know who defines us. We got very good recently at saying, not the people around me. They don't define me. And there's definitely value in that. That's helpful, isn't it? And we've tried defining ourselves.

[5 : 36] If you look at the world around us, I don't think we're any better off since we tried that. We answered it with the kids. God defines us. The bookend verses tell us, God is the greatest.

He defines what we are. He is our beginning. He determines the date of our birth. And he is our end.

He knows our final day on this earth, doesn't he? Just put it in HBC terms for a minute. He is the Alpha. And he is the Omega. That's what the Bible says, isn't it?

He's not just the one who loves us. He's the one whose power encircles our entire lives. So here's another question to think about. What bookends your life right now?

What encircles you? What holds you? What keeps you stable? Where do you go for meaning and joy? Who is the author? The problem is, of course, that the world isn't the way that it's described in Psalm 8.

[6 : 51] With God bookending our lives. Us in our right place. Living out of the joy and purpose that knowing where we belong gives us. The world isn't like that, is it?

We're a mess. Why is that? It's because our hearts are broken. When I read this Psalm, and it says that God's glory is above the heavens, and my place is under him, and above everything else.

Here's how I think. No thanks. I don't want to be told what to do by anyone. I don't want anyone in charge of me. I want to define my own life. Thank you very much.

I want that right for me. I don't want to owe anybody anything. Maybe you felt that when I was speaking just now.

And explaining that Psalm. Maybe that was your reaction. That is why we are in the mess we're in. Because that condition of our hearts leads to two things.

[7 : 55] One, we lose our God-given dignity. And we become lower. Less than what we should be.

More like the animals we're supposed to be caring for. Now, if you know the Narnia books, and you know the magician's nephew, then you'll know that C.S. Lewis retells the beginning of the world.

And Aslan, the great lion who represents the Lord Jesus, creates creatures. And he gives them the ability to speak. It's based on your story of Jesus. Thank you, Tomi. It is based on the story of Jesus.

And he warns the creatures at the same time. He says, I've made you more than just dumb animals. But, if you forget my ways.

If you forget my words. You will lose. That power to speak. And you will just become the dumb animals you once were.

[8 : 58] That's what happens when we reject God and his ways. Number one. Number two. We don't go lower. But we try to climb higher. Than what we ought. We step into God's place.

We say, I'll be in charge. Thank you. And do you know what? We're not meant to carry that strain. The strain of defining ourselves.

Creating an identity for ourselves. So it breaks us. Or we end up with a God complex. It's a bit like the Greek myth of Icarus.

If you remember that from history. Or maybe your classics days. And how many of you studied classics. Here's Icarus. He decides, I want to fly up to where the gods are. So what does he do? He designs wings. Made of feathers and wax. And his father says, don't do it. But he doesn't listen. And he takes off. And he climbs higher and higher.

[9 : 53] And higher and higher. And then he gets too close to the sun. And the wax melts. And Icarus falls. That's what happens when we reject God as king.

That's the source of all the problems in us. In our relationships. And in our world. But the good news is that God offers us a way back. A way back to the place that we should be in.

And in this psalm. Amazingly. It starts with the praise of kids. The sorts of songs that we've been singing with our kids at HBC this week. In fact.

You see. When we say sorry to God. And we ask for our places back. He doesn't just say yes. He adopts us. And he makes us his children. Part of his family.

And he teaches us to sing to him. And when we do that. When we sing as God's children to him. Something amazing happens. Look at verse 2 with me. Through the praise of children and infants.

[10:53] You have established a stronghold against your enemies. To silence the foe and the avenger. Somehow. Amazingly. God uses the songs that we sing as his children.

To silence evil. And to create strongholds of peace. Isn't that incredible? Little steps back towards the world.

The way it should have been. Through the songs of children. Seems silly. Seems small. Seems irrelevant to the adult world. But in God's hand.

An incredible weapon for good. How? How is singing the solution? Well we find the answer in the New Testament.

Matthew chapter 21. Verses 15 and 16. Because that's where we learn what the children are singing. Are you ready for this? The leading priests.

[11:51] Jesus. The teachers of the religious law. Saw the wonderful miracles. And heard even the children in the temple. Shouting praise God for the son of David.

But the leaders were indignant. They asked Jesus. Do you hear what these children are saying? Yes. Jesus replied. Haven't you ever read the scriptures? For they say.

You have taught children and infants to give you praise. So Jesus is referring to Psalm 8. And what are the children singing? They are singing praise God for the son of David.

In other words. For Jesus. Jesus is the successor to the man who wrote Psalm 8. Jesus is the content of praise.

He's the one who's on his way to Jerusalem to die in our place. To pay for that rejection of God. That rebellion against him. To mend our brokenness. To make a way for us to be able to sing forever as he rises.

[12:53] Trusting in that good news. That's what allows us to be forgiven. To be adopted. To sing forever. To be part of that children's choir.

That silences evil. That builds strongholds of peace. Amen. I just want to tell you about the singing revolution. In 1980s.

Estonia was under Soviet rule. Those of you who were around back then will remember that Soviet rule was absolutely brutal. It restricted all kinds of freedoms. It denied human dignity.

Made people less than what they were. And it denied God's existence. Just like we've been warned about in this psalm. And the people of Estonia were not free. Estonian songs, traditions, they were all banned.

And in June 1988. A hundred thousand Estonians gathered. At a traditional song festival. For a spontaneous mass singing. Of those songs that had been banned.

[13:54] And they were led largely by choirs of children. And choirs with children in them. And that was the beginning of the singing revolution. That movement continued.

That singing continued. And the children continued. All the way up to the 20th of August 1991. When amid the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Estonian Republic was restored peacefully. All because. Of children singing. When we sing about Jesus. To the Father.

By the Holy Spirit. It is like a revolution like that. But for the entire universe. It is a revolution that spreads his freedom to everybody.

So here's my final question for you this morning. Are you part of anything that amazing? Do you want to be?

[14:55] Then follow Jesus. The one that these children were singing about. If you want that place back. That place where we serve him.

Sing to him. That place where we know what we are. That we are loved. Made and gifted by God. Then come and follow Jesus. Come and follow the Jesus.

That the kids have been singing about. Talk to us. We would love to talk with you. We would love to pray with you. If that's what you want. Praise God. Indeed. Let me just pray. Then Jesus called the children to him.

And said to his disciples. Let the children come. Don't stop them. For the kingdom of God. Belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth. Anyone who doesn't receive the kingdom of God.

Like a child. Will never enter it. Lord Jesus. Please call us to you. Lord Jesus. Please help us to come trusting like little children.

[15 : 58] Lord Jesus. Please adopt us as your own. Please teach us to sing. Please don't let us fail to receive your kingdom. And be locked out of glory.

These things we pray in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen.