

God's Glory on the Earth

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[0 : 00] And Psalm 8, page 546. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise, because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned him with honour and glory. You made him ruler over the works of your hands.

You put everything under his feet. All flocks and herds, all the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, all that swim in the paths of the seas.

[1 : 06] O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Hebrews 2, verses 5-9, page 1202.

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified.

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honour, and put everything under his feet.

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him, but we see Jesus, who is made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Thank you very much, Maeve and Graeve. Bless Ralph to come up now. This is Ralph coming up.

[2 : 16] Ralph is one of our elders here in the church, and while John is away he is kind of in charge. We can behave ourselves even, but John is over. Absolutely.

You don't need me around for that. Hopefully not. Okay. Ralph is going to be speaking to us from Psalm 8. Just before you speak, Ralph, will you pray to us?

Sure. Let's pray. Lord, again, we just thank you for gathering us here this morning. We thank you for your word, Lord, and thank you for the fact that we can have it and read it freely, Lord, without any fear of persecution or anything like that, Lord.

We just thank you now for Ralph, Lord, and pray that you would speak to us through him, Lord. And pray that you would bless what he has to say to us, Lord, and what you are going to say through him, Lord.

We just pray that you would anoint him with your Holy Spirit and us as well, Lord, as we listen to him, Lord. Again, Lord, we just are so grateful for having people like Ralph in the church, Lord, who are able to speak from your word, and we just thank you for that, Lord.

[3 : 24] Now, again, we just would ask that you would help us to concentrate, Lord, and to take in what it is that you want to say to us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning, everyone.

Thank you, Ian, for leading this morning and for fitting in so well with the theme that we're going to look at from Psalm chapter 8 this morning. I was just really struck by the songs that we were singing, how appropriate they are when we look and when we delve into Psalm 8, speaking of the wonder of Christ who came from heaven, came to earth to be our substitute and to restore us to our rightful position as God's people.

So we're going to turn, as I said, to Psalm chapter 8, page 546. We're continuing our summer series, reading through the Psalms together.

Last week, for those who were here, Ted Kelly reminded us of the death of the Psalms. And he shared a really helpful little quote from, or a little idea from Martin Luther, that the Psalms are really,

they're like a little Bible.

And what Luther means is that the Psalms, they capture the whole story of the Bible. Jesus used the Psalms to teach his followers all about himself.

[5 : 01] The Psalms, they're just full of the promise of Jesus, God's forever king. So even though they were written a thousand years before Jesus ever came, they speak fully of Jesus and who he is and what he would be like when he came.

So this morning we're going to come to Psalm 8 and we're going to unpack the story of these nine verses together. And I hope that in unpacking these nine verses of Psalm 8 that we will see the big story of the Bible.

So we're going to do the unfolding, we're going to do the unpacking in four parts or four chapters if you like. The first one is that God shows his glory.

The second thing we're going to see is that God shares his glory. Thirdly, we shame his glory. And finally, God saves for his glory.

So this is the storyline as we're going to work through it this morning. This is just to help us see where we're going in case you get bogged down in the middle and wonder if I'm ever going to end over the four-hour sermon.

[6 : 07] So like all good stories, in Psalm 8, we have a beginning, a middle, and an end. And in this case, where we start and where we're going to finish up is going to be the same, isn't it, if we look at Psalm 8.

King David gives us two identical bookends that hold the whole story together. It's that great phrase, isn't it? O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

It's a shout of praise about God who is described as the Lord, the ruler. It's speaking of God's name, this phrase, isn't it? His reputation, if you like.

It's bigger. It's better than anything else in all of the earth. And this bookend, it's clearly important to the story of Psalm 8 that we understand this shout of praise, these bookends from David.

So what do they mean? How or why should God's name be majestic in all the earth? We shouldn't take that for granted. Why is that the case? And David explains the reason for his praise by retelling an old, old story.

[7 : 21] In fact, he tells us the oldest story, the story of creation. Now, just a little aside, when I speak of the word story, I don't mean some kind of fairy tale.

I don't mean some kind of embellished retelling of something that happened in the past. We routinely tell the little kids, you know, oh, it's only a story, you know, and that kind of throwaway phrase.

And we have to be thoughtful and careful how we speak, not just to our children, but as we listen to a sermon this morning and what I say. So when I say story, I don't mean a fairy tale.

For the story that we're looking at is a real story, it's a deep story, and it's a true story. One that we can see the truth of as we look all around us in creation. So as we look closely, we see that the main part of Psalm 8 is a poetic retelling, if you like, of chapters 1 and chapter 2 of Genesis, the creation account.

So in verse 1, we read about the heavens and the earth in Psalm 8. In verse 3, we're told of really the creation of the sun and the moon and the stars.

[8 : 33] Verse 7 mentions the animals, the birds and the fish. And finally, verse 8 speaks and reminds us of man and woman being created in God's likeness who were to rule over the earth.

People were created in the image of God. Therefore, we can talk about people being God's image bearers, those that bear God's image on the earth, the highlight of creation.

So we can't not read Psalm 8 and hear that echo of the creation story. The echoes of the wonder and the glory of the early chapters of Genesis.

And it's from the second part of verse 1 that we get our heading for the first part of this story within Psalm 8. God shows us His glory, especially as He has established His glory above the heavens. And it's true, isn't it, when we look up at the night sky that we can see something of the glory of God. So let us stand with David as he does in verse 3, as he considers the heavens, and look at what he calls the work of God's fingers.

[9 : 45] Picture yourselves, and this is going to be difficult, you know, you're from Ireland. Picture yourselves on a rare cloud-free night somewhere in West Cork. One place I always remember is Castle Freak, you know, the old ruins there and the beach and stuff, but kind of away from the light

pollution, looking up at the starry host.

And we might even be tempted as we look up to kind of touch the stars or poke at them, or maybe even we feel like first three that we can, you know, we can move them around and set them in place.

Well, if you've ever been tempted to do that, to set the stars in their place, consider this. The earth, which is where we all are right now, is about, around the outside, the circumference is about 40,000 kilometres.

So if you wanted to travel just around the earth once in a jumbo jet, which is, you know, about as fast as you could realistically go, it would take you about four days, non-stop, just to get around the earth once.

That's just the earth. And it's actually a midget compared to the sun and to the stars, isn't it? The earth might be 40,000 kilometres around the outside, but the sun is 4,400,000 kilometres around the outside of our sun.

[11:00] So if you want to take the same trip and do a tour just around the sun, just once, it's going to take you about 400 days to complete that journey. Of course, to get from the earth to the sun is 150 million kilometres, so it'll take you about 50 years to get there anyway in the first place.

So after we've conquered the earth, going around at once and conquered the sun going around at once, then we have to consider the scale of the universe. Now, it's only an estimate and a guess as much as we can, but there are about 10 to the power of 21 stars in the universe.

So that's that scientific notation. What that means is there are 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars that we kind of know about in the universe. Of course, we don't really know how big the universe is. So after we've, you know, had a look at the sun and had a look at the earth, we have a lot more to do. One followed by 21 zeros after it. And do you know what? Our sun is actually quite small compared to some of the other stars that are out there.

In fact, it's a tiny little midget of a sun. There's some great diagrams and pictures and videos on the internet that you can look up that'll give you an idea of the scale. But I have a picture here of one of them.

[12:16] So this is the largest known star. It may not be the biggest one because there are gas clouds in the Milky Way and we can't see everything. But it's called VY Canis Majoris.

Okay? And that's our, this little dot here is our sun. I can't really see it well, but that's kind of a curve down here of this little bit. That's our sun in comparison to the largest known star.

You would need about 7 billion suns to make up one of these stars. And this probably isn't even the biggest one that's out there. To do a little tour around the outside of this one, four days for the earth, 400 days for the sun, 11,000 years.

Just to take a trip around this one once. So I think we can see from the universe and from this psalm that the heavens were created with vastness and scale in order to bring glory to God.

When we look at the beauty and when we look at the wonder of the universe, we are meant to say, what an awesome, what a mighty God must have created all of this.

[13:27] It's no bother to God to put a thousand, million, million, million stars in their place, even if they are 7 billion times bigger than our own sun. When we look, we say, you know, we can barely imagine the true size and scale of our own sun, yet alone consider all the other stars.

How much more beautiful, how much more perfect must the creator of all of this be? That's why God has created such a wonderful universe, to show himself.

Have you ever wondered, have you ever had that wonder, why the universe is made so big? Well, John Piper gives a very good explanation, I think, for the reason for such splendor in creation. This is what he says.

Do people go to the Grand Canyon to increase their self-esteem? Probably not. This is, at least, a hint that the deepest joys in life come not from savoring the self, but from seeing splendor.

And in the end, even the Grand Canyon will not do. We were made to enjoy God. God has created such grand canyons in the heavens for us so that we would look for the glory that is above the heavens and there that we would find him.

[14:44] And in finding him, we then find that we are made to enjoy him. This is the essence of verse 1, isn't it?

You have set your glory above the heavens. So given the glory of God seen in creation, is it any wonder then that verse 4 of Psalm chapter 8 follows after verse 3?

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him. It has to be our natural response, doesn't it? An overwhelming sense of smallness within ourselves in such a vast creation. What indeed is special about man that God would even take notice of him? And the answer given for us is verses 5 and 6 which form part 2 of our Psalm 8 story. God shares his glory.

[15:58] God has chosen to create man and woman and in doing so allows us to share in his glory. And before we delve into that, I think it's important that we first realise that God didn't have to create.

God didn't have to make us. God was fully complete in eternity past without the creation. you see, within the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit shared and gave glory one to another. And it was out of this overflowing love that they then created people in their own image and allow those people, you and me, to enter into a relationship with God so that we may share and take part in God's glory, God's sharing of his glory.

You see, God is a loving person. He invites others to share his glory. And he has given us, his people, a privileged position to rule over his creation and has crowned us, as it says, with glory and honour.

So this is where scripture puts us in relation to the rest of creation as God's special image bearers and rulers on the earth. Now if we ask the question of verse 4 to an atheist or a materialist, someone that rejects the idea of God, what is man that you are mindful of him?

[17:24] Well their answer has to be nothing. There's nothing special about man. Those who reject the idea of a creator God must conclude that man simply does not matter.

Compared to the size and to the age and the scale of the universe, man is nothing more than a random collection of a small number of atoms that decide to come together for a short while and after 80 years the atoms go their separate ways.

To avoid the evidence for God people begin to build arguments, don't they, and justifications as to why God must not exist or cannot exist. What kind of a God is that who creates people to bow down and worship him in constant praise?

He must be very needy or selfish or some kind of egotistical kind of God. Who would want to know a God like that if that's what he's about, making robot creatures to bow down and worship him? What they are doing in constructing those arguments and working these things through is choosing to ignore scripture and the evidence of scripture and verses like 5 and 6 in Psalm chapter 8 where we see that God is unselfish and loving.

[18:41] God shares with us his glory. And as we saw something in the quote from John Piper, it is as we enter into beholding God's glory that we are most satisfied in God.

And as we are most satisfied in God, God is indeed most glorified by his creation. Now I think verses 5 and 6 have a lot of implications for us if we think them through and a lot of application. Really we are responsible as God's image bearers to represent God on earth. So how we behave on earth, whether for good or ill, reflects ultimately on the glory of God.

And someone put it like this. I think this is a challenge certainly to me. What would your church here in Caragallion and the worldwide church look like if everyone was as committed as you are?

If everyone gave and served and prayed exactly like you, would the church be healthy and empowered or would it be weak and listless? Tough words to consider, isn't it?

[19:56] How does your life, how do your decisions, how do your priorities, reflect on God and his glory? I don't know about you, but trying to measure myself up to what it says in verses 5 and 6 and our role, it leaves me with a slightly empty feeling.

And so I can look again at the question in verse 4, and it's now a little bit more personal, isn't it? It's a different life. why should God care about me?

I fail to live up to the honour and glory that God has given to me. There's an unspoken tension that's bubbled throughout Psalm 8.

For all its beautifully written words, something just, it just doesn't sit right with us as we read it. The creation order that we read of in Psalm 8, the creation account that we read of in Genesis 1 and 2, it's just no longer reflected in our world, is it?

We read in verses 7 and verses 8 about ruling really over the beasts of the field, the flocks and the herds, the birds of the air, everything under our feet.

[21 : 11] But it doesn't sound like it's speaking of our planet, on planet earth, if we think we're doing well, if we can get Fido the dog to sit. But I'll tell you for nothing, no shark intent on eating you is going to swim away because you tell him, well, actually I'm God's image bearer, bit of respect here, you know, don't be biting my leg.

You know, we really, we don't see this, do we, this kind of creation order and this kind of rule as it's described here. And if we consider it, then we remember, don't we?

Genesis chapter 3 always follows Genesis chapters 1 and chapters 2. You see, Genesis 1 and 2 are the high point of the created universe, man and woman living in perfect harmony with God and each sharing and bringing glory one to another.

But then comes chapter 3 where we read about the fall of man and bang, it's all ripped apart, it's all torn apart. Sin enters, shame enters, man, man is corrupted and blinded by sin.

So instead of seeking our happiness in the creator, we turn to the creation to find ultimate joy and happiness. This is part 3 of the story of Psalm 8.

[22 : 34] We no longer want to see God's glory, we no longer share in his glory, instead, we, his creatures, we bring shame to his glory.

Now Paul in Romans chapter 1 in the New Testament puts it better than I ever could, and I think we would do well to consider his words this morning. They're up on the screen so you don't have to flick over to Romans 1.

This is what Paul says, and I think he captures this very well. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power, and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they came to be wise, they became fools, and this is the key. They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man, and birds, and animals, and reptiles.

[23 : 45] What shame we bring on God's glory, by exchanging it for the glory of created things. We turn what are good things in creation into the ultimate thing.

We raise it up, and in doing so, we displace God and take him away from his rightful place. It's like even though we reject God, and we reject praising God and glorifying him, we still feel compelled within our hearts, because we're made in God's image, to praise something, or to glorify something, or to find something, to find some meaning.

So we spend our lives looking to heap praise on created things, instead of heaping praise on the creator. You know, it's very simple, our lives should shout out, look at the Lord, but quite often in our lives, they shout out, look at me, look at my great job, see my wonderful kids, look at my impressive DVD collection, look at my nice car, look at how righteous a Christian I am.

What an insult, what an insult to his generous God, who has shared his glory with us, and given us rule over his creation. Chapter 3, or part 3 of our story of Psalm 8.

Is us shaming his glory. It is the hidden story, the hidden part of Psalm 8 that bubbles under the surface.

[25 : 24] For all the praise that's in Psalm 8, all the wonder of creation that we've thought about is spoiled by us, by our rebellion, by our selfish living.

What hope for God's creation with sinful man at the helm? I don't know, will we ever make it to verse 9 and to our final bookend of this story?

But, there is good news, there is hope. We can actually read Psalm 8 in one of two ways. The main idea, I think clearly that the writer David has in mind in Psalm 8 is the creation account in Genesis, isn't it?

I think that's very, very clear. But there is another author of Psalm 8 besides King David, and that is the Holy Spirit. So, Psalm 8 also speaks of a new creation, not just the old creation in Genesis 1 and 2, but of a new creation, where order is restored and people once again live under God's glory as his image bearers and as his people.

And it was a thousand years, took a thousand years after Psalm 8 was written, that another writer picked up the plot line of Psalm 8 and filled in for us the final chapter that will get us to verse 9.

[26 : 50] And it was the reading in Hebrews that Graham read, and we're going to turn to Hebrews. If you want to keep a finger in Psalm 8 you can. It would be good to turn to Hebrews chapter 2, that's on page 1202.

And if we read verses 5 to 8, we'll see this plot line being picked up. Now to give us some basic context as we jump into the New Testament and jump into Hebrews chapter 2, the writer of Hebrews has been arguing that God's Son, Jesus, is superior to the angels.

So we hear about angels we mentioned. And now he's pointing out or arguing that it is destined for man to rule once more in a new earth. So verse 5.

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking, but there is a place where someone has testified. What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honour and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him.

[28 : 00] Yet, at present, we do not see everything subject to him. man. So the writer of Hebrews is picking up the idea from Psalm 8 of a new creation where man once again is ruling over everything, order restored.

But, he has to admit, doesn't he, that yet, at present, we do not see everything subject to man, so don't try commanding the sharks. So if we cannot see this new creation now, where is our hope for today, if it's only a future thing that's far off?

How do we know that it's going to come to pass? We're in need of a B-U-T statement. And we have it in verse 9. But, B-U-T, we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

Jesus Christ has stepped in to the story of Psalm 8. He became the perfect man that we read about in Psalm 8, verse 5, that's repeated here in Hebrews, that was first made a little lower and then crowned again.

Jesus, he was Lord when he went from heaven to earth. at that point he let go of the display of his rightful glory, but later Jesus was crowned with glory and honour that comes from obedience to the Father.

[29 : 43] And Jesus, he was obedient even to death on a cross, and Jesus, he tasted death for us all, so that we can be saved for his glory.

And what we read in Hebrews chapter 2 is the wonderful way that the tension that's there in Psalm 8, that's sitting under the surface, is resolved and brought to a close.

God himself steps into his creation to restore order and bring glory back to himself. And he does this by sending his one and only son, who came to represent us as the perfect image bearer.

He came as a man, he lived as a perfect man, and Jesus, he always brought glory and honour back to God the Father. God's glory is not just way out there above the heavens, but has come right down to the earth.

God's glory was born in a stable, God's glory lived with all the normal happiness and all the sadnesses that come from daily life. God's glory suffered opposition and criticism of the religious leaders, but God's glory was praised by the children and praised by the infants to shame the foe and to shame the avenger.

[31 : 15] As it says in Psalm 8 verse 2, God's glory suffered rejection and suffered a cruel death on the cross in place of us obnoxious rebels.

God's glory is Jesus on the earth. This is glory, God's redemption of us through the cross, so that we may once again share his honour.

We indeed are saved for his glory. We have a privilege in this age to read Psalm 8 because we can read it in both ways, can't we?

We can read Psalm 8 and we can look back at Genesis 1 and 2 and praise God and thank him for such a wonderful creation, or we can read it and look forward to Revelation chapter 21 and Revelation chapter 22 and there we read John describing for us a new heaven and a new earth and a new creation and a new order.

The good news is the bookends that we spoke about in Psalm chapter 8 that lovely phrase O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth it no longer needs to be tarnished by our failure for Christ has made all things new.

[32 : 36] And there's a challenge we spoke about it during the sermon the challenge that is there from Psalm 8 as to how we will live and it's there again for us will we choose to bring glory to God on earth by accepting Jesus will that be your choice or will we continue to turn our back on God and

live for the glory of some passing thing in creation that ultimately is going to be destroyed anyway because of Jesus we can finish the story of Psalm 8 and get to verse 9 can't we and the glory of God will still be intact O Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth let us in Karagaline compete with the heavens in declaring God's glory here on earth let's pray God aside ton to let's to run from to on earth the everyoneues may if you

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