

“Oh Lord, how majestic is your name”

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[0 : 00] If you'd like to turn or open Psalm 8 on your Bibles or devices, we'll be reading from that. Psalm 8. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants you have established strength because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moons 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?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Well, good morning, everyone. I'm David, one of the pastors here, if you're a visitor and don't know me.

So I wonder what the word worship means to you. What does it bring to mind? Probably the first cab off the rank for most of us would be, well, it's the sort of thing we do on Sunday morning here at our meeting.

[1 : 30] We sing, we pray, we sit under God's word. That's worship. Well, yes, it is. But worship is actually much bigger than that.

It's much bigger than a church thing. Indeed, it's much bigger even than a Christian thing. I suggest to you this morning that worship is a human thing.

Worship is something that's hardwired into us as humans, as people. It's something we do all the time. To be human is to be a worshiper.

Because at the simplest level, worship is simply ascribing ultimate value or worth to someone or something. And everybody does that in some shape or form.

Worship is ascribing, as I say, ultimate value, praise, or to use the word of Psalm 8, glory to a person or thing we think is significant or important in life.

[2 : 48] It's something which probably has also captivated our heart and our minds. Now, of course, religious people, and I'm talking about any sort of religion, not just Christians at this point, religious people ascribe ultimate value or worth to God.

And, of course, that God can take various shapes and forms. But generally, religious people do that. But people who deny being religious are also worshipers.

Because there's always something in life, their life, that they ascribe ultimate worth to. Perhaps for them it's a relationship.

Perhaps it's an object, a possession. Perhaps it's sport. Perhaps it's shopping. Perhaps it's leisure. Perhaps it's being out in nature. Or, in many cases, it's ascribing ultimate value to themselves.

And so they engage in self-worship. They might not realize it, but that's ultimately what they're about. And then you take another step.

[3 : 53] And when we ascribe ultimate value to someone or something, we prioritize that someone or something. We center our life around it. Or around that person.

And most of our decisions from that point then are shaped by our devotion to that person or thing. That's the anatomy of worship.

And because our worship reflects ultimate value and ultimate worth, then it also connects us into what we believe is our ultimate purpose in life.

Our ultimate meaning. Or, in other words, it connects us into what we believe the truly good, satisfying, rich life is. Well, with that introduction, I want to now jump into Psalm 8, where King David is swept up into worship from the very depth of his being.

Ascribing ultimate worth, glory, and praise to the Lord. Captivated by his awesome character and actions, as he expresses in words some very, very powerful conclusions about God.

[5 : 14] Psalm 8 is a song, a poem of worship. And the first powerful conclusion that David presents in verses 1 and 2 is that God is glorious in himself.

And without limit. Now, this picture that Beth had put up, the night sky, I can tell you, I'm a camper. I never tire, after many, many, many years of camping, I never tire of lying on my back on a clear, cold, frosty night up in the high country, preferably, looking up at the sky.

And I'm just looking at a trillion stars and galaxies. Stars and galaxies behind stars and galaxies. So distant that the light they emit can take many hundreds, if not thousands of years to get to my eyes.

And yet on a bright night, so clear that I feel as if I can reach out and touch them. And as Beth said to the children, the awesomeness of it makes me feel so small.

It overwhelms me. And what do I do? Every single time I reach for the opening words of Psalm 8. Why do I reach for those words? Because I'm trying to get words to express something that I just find is beyond expression.

[6 : 50] I'm trying to find words to capture in my mind that which is, well, ultimately beyond any mind can fathom, beyond that which any mind can fathom.

King David pens these words, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Perhaps King David, as he writes these words, remembers David the shepherd boy, minding his father's sheep at night out on the hills.

Lots of time just to enjoy the night sky, the solitude. Perhaps it's King David as a man on the roof of his palace at the end of a long, hard day, just enjoying the cool of the evening as the evening celestial light show appears before him.

Either way, it doesn't matter. The awesomeness of the vast night sky prompts King David to worship. To ascribe ultimate value, praise, and glory to God as he writes.

Now, if you look at verse 1, then we jump into this and we start to see some depth in it. This is not just a, when he says, O Lord, our Lord, it's not just a concept of God as some mysterious superior being or force somewhere out there in our universe.

[8 : 26] Someone who may exist, but ultimately who's distant and perhaps uninvolved and perhaps uncaring. Now, when David speaks in worship, he's seeing the fingerprints of a very personal, immediate, powerful, creative, involved God.

And he acknowledges the handiwork and the hallmark of O Lord, our Lord, using two different names of God. The first one, O Lord, is the word Yahweh, the personal name of God, the covenant God who's already committed himself to his world and to dealing with sinful people who's committed to love and show compassion and care for.

And the second one is sovereign Lord, highlighting the character of God that is all powerful, beyond challenge, without limit.

The one who's in total control as the owner, maker, and operator of the universe that David is appearing into. See, for David, God's name is God's character.

And wherever he looks in the vastness of the sky, in the vastness of the universe, he sees evidence of God's greatness, God's glory, God's majesty, or a more modern word for us, I suppose, young people's word, God's awesomeness.

[9 : 58] And he says, you have set your glory above the heavens. Now, we need a little bit of help to understand that.

And here it is, the Jews in David's day thought of the universe as three levels of heavens. first is what we would call the sky or the atmosphere and the second is then what we would call outer space and the third level is beyond that the heaven of heavens as they used to call it the place where God exists where God is so David's saying here that God is so majestic, so glorious so all powerful that he has actually put his glory everywhere in the universe God's glory David understands is far greater than can be observed, far greater than can be described there's no place in the universe where there's not the fingerprints of God for David you see it's not possible to add to God's glory it cannot be matched it cannot be surpassed it is ultimate it is above the heavens it is beyond this physical creation and my friends

I think honest observation the universe pushes a person to this conclusion I think there's a little better commentary in verse 1 than the children's song I think Colm Buchanan my God is so big so strong and so mighty there's nothing my God cannot do and then we move into verse 2 which perhaps at first seems like jar a contrast or something it had me thrown for a little while out of the mouths of babes and infants you have established strength because of your foes to still the enemy and the avenger when I first started to look at it I thought that verse just doesn't quite fit in there but then I realized it's the other side of the coin in which David introduces the notion of foes and enemies and avengers that is people who are in opposition to this great and powerful and glorious God because that's the reality of this world people who are determined to be their own authority people who are determined to live in the world without reference to God and I think the two verses go together like this or something like this

I think just as it's impossible verse 1 to add to God's glory so verse 2 David's saying it's impossible to detract from God's glory even those who challenge him in his powerfulness and his supremacy it's not possible to take away from his glory God's response to those who rebel against him shows his limitless majesty or glory and power and we have the imagery there of little babies and toddlers and what are they well in a sense they're the least if you had to think of something of power and influence a changer in this world you wouldn't think of a baby or a toddler and it's the words emphasized there so very very simple words faltering words and I have to say as a grandpa sometimes unintelligible words but that's what the Lord's using to confound his enemies to still them in other words he just settles them down makes their wheels spin takes them out of the action neutralizes them and it speaks therefore of the ease with which our all powerful

God does that he cannot add to his glory nor will any opposition detract from his glory or challenge his glory the same thought actually is expressed in Psalm 2 and you could look at Psalm 2 through to Psalm 8 as an inclusive or a group of Psalms both have this very strong sense of God is in control of his world yes there's a lot out there who would oppose God enemies who would take God out take God down or at least try to but Psalm 2 picture there is well God just sits back hands behind his head and has a good old laugh that's bright in my day God sits on his throne and laughs at those who would rebel and treat his glorious name with disregard at that point I just want to pause and ask two questions I want to ask you first of all if you are sure that your world view is thoroughly biblical now your world view is like a set of glasses it's the lens through which you see life through which you understand life through which you operate in life it determines how you understand and live in the world and in this situation it determines who or what you worship who or what you ascribe ultimate value or worth to and so the question out of Psalm 8

[16:11] I think for each of us this morning is is your worldview shaped and filled with the awesome grandeur of our majestic all powerful glorious God now that's becoming increasingly important for us to be able to answer that question because our world view needs to stand untroubled by those who in the name of science would remove God completely from our minds and from this world arguing that our universe is coming to existence by a product of chance cause and effect and we are the masters of our own destiny will your worldview stand untroubled by those who want to redefine God as just a spiritual force and we're bombarded by that new spirituality these days that God is actually just a mysterious non-specific spiritual super being somewhere out there a mysterious force that somehow or other we have to find and tap into or perhaps even that that forces ourselves to be found within ourselves and will your worldview stand untroubled by those who would confine

God by saying well yes God exists but he's distant he's not actually interested in our world so as long as you just believe in the concept of God you can actually still just live however you like he's impersonal and simply the great architect of our world not interested in how we live or behave a bit like a landlord as long as you keep paying your rent you know giving God due acknowledgement then you can do whatever you like we're under attack constantly to just subtly shift our worldview to sort of meld what we see here in the Bible with what's around us in our culture and I think as Christians we do it more than we realise but you can have a think about that the second question I want to ask you now is do you hear the whisper of Jesus in verse 2 it's interesting in Matthew chapter 21 verse 16

Jesus quotes the first part of verse 2 or the whole of verse 2 actually remember in Matthew chapter 21 Jesus just entered Jerusalem there's all the fanfare but behind the fanfare Jesus knows that the Jewish religious leaders are actually plotting to kill him and in less than a week he will actually be crucified and he's just cleaned up the temple and once again the Jewish religious leaders express their hatred of Jesus yes hatred this time the circumstance in which they express their hatred is that they're really really annoyed that Jesus would accept the praise of little children little street kids running after Jesus calling him son of David that is addressing Jesus as the Messiah recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah and the Jewish religious leaders they're furious that Jesus accepted that essentially accusing Jesus of blasphemy

Jesus says don't you remember and he quotes this verse Jesus reminds them that God could and would use any means to bring glory to himself and in saying that I think Jesus is saying to the Jewish religious leaders to stir them up even more you accuse me of blasphemy well let me tell you very clear I am God he's declaring himself to be God and secondly involved in that he's actually declaring himself to be worthy of the praise and the glory that these little street kids are in their smallness of mind giving them they don't for a second understand all about Jesus but they sense something and they adore something and I think the same principle is true for us today Jesus says in another place unless you come to me as little children you'll never see the kingdom of God these little children who spoke to Jesus and called him

Messiah well they didn't understand everything about Jesus they can explain everything about Jesus but they sensed something the Lord probably put it in their mind to come to him as saviour and king that's what Messiah he came to him and worshipped him praised him my friends that's the pattern still to this day do I understand everything I read in the Bible no I wish I did but then what would I talk to people I work with and people I hang out with as part of the enjoyment of just digging into God's word but I know enough to see the limits of my understanding and from there just move into adoration and praise and worship we'll move on to the second point then God's glory is reflected in the glory of man and I've used the word man in the word of commas if you're looking at the sermon outline but really the word there we're picking up is mankind or people or humankind in verses 3 through to 7 so what happens when

[22 : 22] David spends some time considering the glory of God well very simply it pushes him to consider himself in respect of God's universe and in respect of God what's his own place in God's universe what's his own place with this absolutely all powerful all glorious God and verse 4 immediately David's blown away with the realization that God is deeply committed to being in relationship with his created beings we already saw that in the way that David spoke to God in verse 1 Yahweh it's a term of relationship but he comes back now and spells it out a little bit more and questions it what is man that you are mindful of him the son of man that you care for him God is committed to being in relationship with his created beings to whom he gives glory in special position honor and responsibility within his world so God is glorious and the way

God has set up the universe to operate gives mankind a special responsibility and a special position a position of reflected glory so friends another point to make here is true worship is responding to with a proper understanding of God's character and glory true worship is responding to God with proper understanding of his character and glory and with the proper understanding of our world and a proper understanding of ourselves with God's reflected glory as created beings as image bearers within the world true worship needs to get a balance of those three things need to understand God we need to understand the world we live in at least the connections of the world we live in and we need to understand ourselves as created beings within

God's glorious world if we get any of those three wrong or if we get them out of whack out of bounds then whatever we do and call it worship it will be false worship and God demands that we worship him because our worship reveals how we value our connection to him how we reflect our dependence on him he is the sovereign lord the creator god we are his created beings if we invert that order so that God is domesticated and becomes defined by us then we're no longer worshipping the lord of the universe we're worshipping something of a figment of our imagination our worship ought to say that he is the ultimate life giving source which means that as we are worshipping servants of the lord then we are best connected to true meaning true purpose and the truly good life and when we express that worship from the depths of our being then we're actually connecting into and enjoying the good life we were created to enjoy flip the coin for a minute what is false worship well false worship is failing therefore to live with reflected glory what's the reflected glory well look at look at the the the verbs listen to the verbs as I read them through you have made him talking about mankind you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings crowned him with glory and honour given him dominion put all things under his feet it's an incredible position of honour and responsibility and indeed reflected glory everything that

God has made in all its beauty has now been given to us in a sense to operate so false worship coming back to think about that false worship is failing to live and operate with the reflected glory given us by God as his image bearers so therefore in a sense put it in other words false worship is actually to steal God's glory or to attempt to steal God's glory or to usurp God's glory for ourselves and again you see I guess I hope I'm not just speaking about myself I think I speak for everybody but we so easily tend to domesticate God don't we we make him subject to our understanding our preferences we think well this is how

God should be this is what God is like this is how he should operate in his world this is how he should operate towards me and so when we do that we still manage an appearance of worship that is we still go through all those religious things we still have the language but it is only an appearance because as we domesticate God and shape him to our preferences and our desires then we're actually expressing autonomy we're actually trying to say I want to worship the Lord but I want to be autonomous I want to run my own paddle my own canoe and sometimes that goes to be so extreme that we even make ourselves God that is we take so much charge of life and think almost like a practical atheism we live and act as though

[29 : 20] God doesn't exist at so many points in our lives and I can only say then that that's self-worship we're ascribing to ourselves ultimate value and worth so the question of all that then I think if you're still with me if you haven't totally lost you is the question for us is are we willing to live with reflected glory and be passionate worshipping image bearers and servants if we live with reflected glory and are worshipping servants then our greatest desire will be to get more and more glory for the Lord the alternative is as I say that we will seek to steal God's glory consciously or unconsciously or find our own glory apart from

God and that's the world we live in it's called expressive individualism we talked about at the end of last year that I can set the good life for myself with my own resources without reference to anybody else of course many here this morning including myself will want to be true worshippers living in reflected glory and yet constantly we find ourselves ascribing ultimate value and worth to things and people knowing they will disappoint as they've disappointed us in the past that is the struggle of living as a Christian at least that's what I find the struggle of living as a Christian is and we tire of that constant struggle to maintain true worship when our hearts are working against us when our hearts want us to lead us astray when our hearts want us to usurp

God's glory for ourselves it's a challenge isn't it and that prompts my second question we're nearly finished the second question is this again have you heard another whisper of Jesus in verses 4 through to 7 it's a beautiful desirable picture there I think in those verses 47 the picture of man and the son of man that is man and his descendants ruling God's world under God's control and in harmony with him it's a beautiful picture isn't it mankind living happily and fully in the reflected glory of God their creator as image bearers of course as I said that's not how we experience life is it life's not simple like that life's a struggle and we're constantly sliding away from that well there's a whisper of

Jesus in that because if you turn to Hebrews chapter 2 with me again the writer of Hebrews picks up this very notion in verses 5 through to 9 he actually quotes Psalm 8 talks about everything being put under the feet of Christ and there's the whisper of Jesus in Psalm 8 that that picture of living completely and happily with great satisfaction in the reflected glory of the Lord only ever came true in Christ go right back to Adam he wasn't able to manage it he usurped God's glory for himself King David he wasn't able to manage it and every one of

God's promise bearers right through the ages right down to Christ himself every son of man failed to be consistently true worshippers failed to be content to reflect God's glory in their lives each was part of the problem of sin part of the problem of craving glory for themselves craving and stealing God's glory but what we're told here is that Jesus was the perfect man the perfect human he was the true son of man in the sense that he lived life perfectly reflecting the glory of God reflecting the picture of creation reflecting the picture of mankind's part in creation his glory was in his obedience to the father his worship of the father his proper understanding of God's world and God's character and this ultimately followed him right through and was demonstrated in his death and resurrection now here's the here's the benefit for us connected to

[34 : 36] Jesus united with him in faith we are considered by God to be true worshippers we cannot consistently worship on our own in spite of our best efforts but in Christ we are true worshippers who bring the Lord delight who are up close and personal with him in relationship and as Hebrews 2 says it hasn't yet been seen for Christ himself but one day will be it's true and one day will be seen by all and the same for us in Christ in the meanwhile Jesus is both our model and our helper as we set ourselves this week again to be true worshippers joyful worshippers those who reflect the glory of God in the way we live in the way we speak in the way we relate to others and those who seek to enhance the glory of God as we struggle to do that more and more and more we have a helper we have a model and it will happen that's God's promise to us in Christ

Hebrews 2 well join me in prayer Lord the picture of worship is one that does delight us we're drawn into it we want to be those who ascribe to you the glory and honour and praise that you deserve and yet Lord at the same time that picture tantalises us because Lord it's so remote from us at some points in our lives we find ourselves just pursuing our own glory or even Lord thinking we can in a sense usurp your glory for ourselves Lord help us to look to the Lord Jesus confident that in him we are true worshippers that united with him we have the power and the ability and the desire God given spirit driven to honour you and to live in reflected glory we pray

Lord that we might this week in whatever circumstances we are in cause those around us whether it be family members or the wider community to see something of the glory of God in the way we speak and the way we conduct ourselves and we pray this in Jesus name Amen Amen