

# Psalm 8 AM

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's pray together as we stand. Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image, and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son, Jesus Christ, grant that as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share in the life of his divinity, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

And grab a seat. Well, my name's Ben. If I haven't met you before, I help to lead the Artizo program, so you'll see me later embarrassing our graduates and doing other things Artizo-related.

And it's a joy to be here this morning and to kick off this short little series in the Psalms. I think we're in it about six weeks. And the Psalms are often called the prayer book of the Bible, which means that they're words from God that we pray to God.

And like any good prayer book, there's something in there for every season of life. So if you've read the Psalms, you know you can find whatever you need. From birth to death, thanksgiving to revenge, from joy to despair, the Psalms speak out of and into every aspect of human experience. And that means that they can answer pretty much any question that we bring. Although I don't know if they can answer it better than the children just did. That was pretty amazing. The question that this Psalm series is aiming to get into a little bit is, what does it mean to be human?

[ 1 : 33 ] What does it mean to be human? That's the title and the topic. We probably won't get to the bottom of it in six weeks. Probably not. We'll do our best.

But we will get to hear how six different Psalms speak into that question. And as we do, we pray that God would tune our hearts to sing his praise. So why don't you open up to page 450 if you're not there right now.

That's Psalm 8. Here's the main idea this morning. Praise the Lord. He's made us with a purpose. And he makes us perfect in Jesus.

And those are my three points. Praise, purpose, perfect. So, praise. Psalm 8 calls us to praise. The structure, you could call it a praise sandwich.

We haven't talked about sandwich. We preach the Gospel of Mark. We are always talking about sandwiches. Here we are talking about sandwiches again. It's the top and the tail. It's verse 1 and verse 9. You probably noticed that. They say this is just the psalmist praising the Lord.

[ 2 : 38 ] Praising the Lord's majesty. So, it's bounded in praise. The bottom and the top. And the middle is just wonder. I think that's what you could say. The meat in the middle is wonder.

It's awe of God. It's awe of God that drives our praise. How can it be that the God above the heavens, so far removed from us, speaks strength through infants?

That the Lord that spun galaxies cares for us. That he crowns us. It's wondrous. It's wondrous. And it calls forth admiration. As we begin to wonder about these things and think about these things, we begin to admire the Lord. And that lifts our hearts up in praise. And that's what's happening in this psalm. You may have noticed, Lord there, Lord is all in caps.

Do you see that? So, this signals that this is God's personal name in the original language. It's Yahweh. I am that I am. He's the creator of all.

[ 3 : 40 ] He's the sovereign of all. His name, it says, rings with majesty. Majesty is not a word that we probably use very often. I can remember twice in my life that I was paralyzed by majesty.

The first time is when I saw the Grand Canyon. And I just kind of tumbled out of the car. I had been sleeping. We had driven through the night. And I just kind of walked out and opened my eyes. And my jaw dropped.

It's the first time I actually was like, oh, that's what that phrase means. So, I was like, just wonder at the Grand Canyon. The second time was one night we were camping in Squamish.

And all of a sudden, the night kind of just started to glow. It lit up. And we looked up at the chief. This just massive sheer wall of granite.

And it was beaming in the moonrise. Just, it was overwhelming. And I felt something. I was actually afraid. Like, I felt afraid of this mountain that had lit up in the night.

[ 4 : 41 ] And that's what majesty is like. It makes us feel small. It helps us to know that we are small. And this, the psalmist says, is what the Lord's name is like in the earth.

It's majestic. It's powerful. It's somewhat terrifying. So, the psalm starts out by putting that vision of God in front of us. And it says, that Lord, oh Lord, is our Lord.

He's ours. We belong to him. He belongs to us. What a wonder. Despite the difference in our size and our power and our goodness, humans are able to relate with God.

It really doesn't make any sense that the majestic Lord, of all things, could be called ours. Or that we could call him mine. I don't go out into my yard and name ants or, you know, other things that are a lot smaller than me.

I don't care about them. I don't relate to them. But God, despite his size and his power, has made humans to relate with him.

[ 5 : 56 ] Oh Lord, our Lord. You are mine, Lord. I am yours, Lord. This is a gift that is given to no other thing in creation. No other created being can say this of the Lord.

You are mine. It's amazing. This Lord, our Lord, has set his glory above the heavens, it says. You could also translate it this way. His glory is chanted above the heavens.

So there's earth, there's the heavens, and then there's God's realm above the heavens. And in that infinity, which we really don't have very much understanding of, we get various pieces of scripture that are telling us what's happening there.

And what we know is that that name, his name, Yahweh, the name of our God, is chanted day and night in God's place. There's hosts of heavenly creatures, beings of light and terror, and his name is eternally echoing in the courts of heaven.

It's our opening verses this morning. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. That's what they say. So we've got this vision of God's name in heaven.

[ 7 : 04 ] His name rings in heaven. And that's the same name that God takes and lends to us. So you go on and it talks about babies and infants, right, in the psalm.

We're like babies and infants. We have no power to protect ourselves. But we're invited to mouth God's majesty. He establishes strength. He builds a wall against his enemies, against our enemies, by giving us his name, which we say.

So, I mean, you could think about this. The Lord could establish his strength against his enemies in any kind of conceivable way. We think of how big and how powerful God is and all the things that he could do just by speaking or thinking them.

But God's will is that he would do it through weakness. So God says, these people, these babies that I've made, this is how and where I'm going to establish my strength in the world and against the things that oppose me and my goodness.

And so as we murmur God's name, the majesty of God is unleashed into the world. Babies and infants, if you think about it, they can't even talk.

[ 8 : 17 ] I've had three of them at some point in my life. They mostly cry. That's what they do. I guess it's pretty applicable, right? God loves us. He's made us to share into his purposes, even though we don't bring very much to the table in a lot of ways.

He still lends us his name. He gives us his strength in our need. And by doing that, he enlists us in his work that he's doing in the world, as we call out his praise and ask for help.

So God uses the weak things of the world to overturn the strong. We know this, right? This is part of what it means to be human, is that we're weak, and yet God's power is at work in our powerlessness.

Verse 3 and 4 continue in wonder. David says, When I look at the heavens, the sun, the stars, the moon, I see the work of God's fingers.

His fingers, not his arms, not his biceps. His fingers. The universe, it's like a handicraft to God, right? It's like he's knitting. It's tiny. It's fiddly to him. The universe. He sets the moons and the stars in places, so it's like he's taking a glass, putting it on a shelf.

[ 9 : 26 ] His fingers are fashioning stars. That's the image. He's spinning planets on his fingertips. This is God's majesty, his natural, kingly, creative power. He is above us.

He is beyond us. And so we're with David here, aren't we, when we come to this question. Why do you think about us? Why do you care about us?

That's the wonder in this psalm. The short answer, the shortest answer that we could give is that he loves us. The Lord loves humanity.

John 3.16 says it like this. God so much loved. He so much loved the world that he gave his only son. Humanity is loved by God.

We're valuable to God who has made us. So our value is not related to our utility, the things we do, or our beauty, our kind of intrinsic desirability.

[10:27] We're inherently valuable because the Lord values us. He gives us our value by loving us. And after getting most of the way through this first point, I think it's fair to say that we tend to underestimate God in our daily lives.

We underestimate his majesty. We also underestimate his love. He's by nature merciful and mighty. He's terrifying and forgiving. So we think too little of God's power. And we think too little of what it means that he cares for us and wants to know us. So Psalm 8 calls us to wonder at his majesty. And then to praise him for his power and his love. But here's the thing. This is another thing that's amazing about this psalm. I can find a lot of things that are amazing about it.

We underestimate God. We also underestimate ourselves. So we, I think, value ourselves less than God does.

[11:33] I know we're narcissistic, so this is a bit weird. But we don't actually, we have less vision for who we are and who we're made to be than God has. God can see us perfected.

He can see the purpose that he has for us in Christ in a way that we can't. And this is what the rest of the psalm gets into. So this is our second point. And it's getting into the point of purpose.

The purpose that we're made for. So not only does God love us and value us, not only is he wonderful, wants to relate to us, he's commissioned us. So God has given us a purpose.

You could just go through and look at all the verbs in verses 5 and 6. You, Lord, have made him and crowned him and given him dominion and put all things under him.

These are all things that are speaking about all of humanity. Each of these is an action of God, and it defines and directs who we are. So look at he made us there.

[12:31] He made us, verse 5, a little lower than the heavenly beings. But if you follow the footnote there to the bottom, you'll find something a little bit shocking. It says, Yet the Lord has made him a little lower than God.

That's a legitimate way to translate that language. Isn't that unbelievable? So humanity is nestled into this kind of unique place. The Lord has ordered all things and made all things, and he's put us in a place in the ordering of things.

We're in a place that's below the heavens, right below God, but we're in a place that's above the earth. We're below God, but we're above all other creatures. That's what Genesis 1 was talking about. So God has made humanity differently than he's made the rest of creation.

We're made in his image. We're made in his likeness. We're given a command that no other creature is given to cultivate, to care for creation. We're made from dust.

In chapter 2, we see, but then we're also filled with God's breath. We are made for a special purpose. And God crowns us.

[13:37] So our crown given by God is exactly this place in creation that we hold. We're crowned, it says, with glory and honor. And I think that that glory and honor shines when we actually reflect God's gracious rule.

So humanity is made to extend and kind of emulate God's rule in the world. So God rules and makes. He loves and values us. And we are to rule and make and love and value creation below us.

And you can see that in the rest of the psalm. That it starts not only with livestock, which obviously, you know, are under our control. But then wildlife and mighty oceans and teeming skies, right?

All of these things. I was trying to think of how to describe this. And the best word I came up with was middle management. Which I know is not maybe particularly flattering.

But it kind of is fitting, isn't it? C.S. Lewis, he talks about how humility is, it's not thinking less of ourselves. That is, it's not demeaning ourselves.

[14:41] But it's thinking of ourselves less. And there's something like that happening here in this psalm. We have this special place. It's this middle place.

And we alone have been given minds. And we've been given the scriptures. And we can understand who God is, part of it. And we can, we have language. We can proclaim him. We can sing to him. We have the ability to order the world in praise.

And we're crowned. So this is pretty exalted. But we're crowned in order to cast our crowns before him. So all of our work elevates God's work.

It honors him. It praises him. It wonders at him. And so like a conductor, human management is meant to order and lead the world in praise.

In the praise of our Lord. Hopefully you're seeing that this is a pretty beautiful picture. This is, this is what we were made for. But you may see some problems.

[15:39] I don't know. Have you, have you thought of any problems? I think the problem is, is that we don't do this. So I know, we know the problem. If we keep going in Genesis 3, we see that this beautiful image of God, this way that we were made, it's been tarnished by sin.

So as you go through the Bible, we start with Genesis 1 and 2. It's beautiful. And then we go on and we see that we've taken this crown that God has given us and we've become tyrants. We're not caring kings the way that God is.

We're tyrants over the things that are under us. And it's so funny, isn't it? We have this sense of what, what a leader or what a ruler should be like. We're so often, we're critiquing, we critique our politicians, right?

Probably rightfully so. A lot of times we critique their leadership. But our own lives are much like this, aren't we? We have, we all have our own domains of influence, our own spheres of influence. And if we're being honest about our lives, we can step back and say, I'm being a bit petty sometimes. I've been cruel, I've been selfish, just the way that I see other people acting.

[16:45] So much of the time we're walking around in this world and we're thinking that we're actually, we're a little bit higher than God. Not a little bit lower. A little bit higher than God.

And then on the other hand, we recognize our failures sometimes and we choose denial or despair at it. We just kind of give up when we look at the brokenness in the world and we flee the responsibility that we have, that God has given us in the world.

God has made, he's crowned, he's given, and he's put things under our feet. We've sinned, rejected, taken, and neglected. And so even as we wonder and praise at who God has made us to be, we grieve, don't we?

We grieve our self-inflicted devastation. So I don't know, you may be tempted to think, Psalm 8, it's over-promising a little bit, under-delivering a little bit, right?

It gives us this beautiful vision, and yet when we're honest, we know that we're not doing this. We don't really see it happening. And this is the final wonder, I think, that drives us to praise this morning.

[17:53] Which is that in the coming of Jesus, God has established his strength finally and perfectly. That's our third and final point, is perfect. Our praise and our purpose are made perfect in Christ.

So I don't know if you know this, but Psalm 8 is quoted four times in the New Testament. That's a really important psalm for understanding who Jesus is. And each time it's quoted, it reminds us that the promise of this psalm, the ultimate fulfillment of this psalm, is fulfilled in Jesus.

And through what Jesus does, it becomes fulfilled in us. So in our own strength, Psalm 8 is beautifully impossible. It's tragic. Psalm 8's humanity's job description, we failed at it.

We haven't done it. And that held true through all of humanity until Jesus. When Jesus, the Lord himself, the majestic one, took on a human body, lived the life that we were designed for, he embraced obedience and humility the way that we were designed to, he became a humble king, who we were meant to be from the beginning.

His life showed how humans were meant to live. That's amazing, isn't it? Jesus sets the bar for what a human is supposed to be. And Jesus shoulders our task by living this human life, and then he shoulders our sin.

[19:21] He dies the death that we deserve for our tyranny. He pays the debt that we accrued for our rebellion. And he did what a good king should always do. He gave his life away for his people.

At the end of our Hebrews reading, he said it like this. Jesus was crowned in glory and honor because of the suffering of death. So that by the grace of God, he might taste death for everyone.

So, after paying our debt, he's raised again radiant, right? He's resurrected. The resurrected Jesus shows us the destination of all humans that are in him. Strong and sinless and joyful and absolutely full of God's life.

Jesus raises again, and we get these tantalizing kind of snapshots of what humanity can look like. And then he ascends into heaven, and he's now in God's place.

And so he's in this place where they're chanting eternally the name of the Lord in worship. And he's in that eternal throne room, and he's seated at God's right hand. And for the first time since creation, a human body is in heaven, in God's place.

[ 20 : 30 ] In this eternal place where they chant the name, there's a human body. Just think about the implications of that. That's our destination, is to be there with Jesus.

And so Jesus is there. He's living and ruling and interceding. Christ is there. And right now, from there, he's ordering all things in the world. He's ordering all things.

It's beyond our vision to see how he's doing this. But we're promised that every kingdom and every creature will be under his feet. To the ultimate praise of God.

He's going to heal and restore and unite all things. And unbelievably, Jesus has chosen to finish this work through his church.

So he's wanting to do this through us. And we've seen the failure of the church enough to be a little bit shocked by this news. Or we should be a little bit shocked by it.

[ 21 : 29 ] That this is God's plan. But when we trust Jesus, when we call him Lord, we're joined to him. And we're given a share in Jesus' work.

We're given the gospel. We're given gifts. And we're given the promise that small acts of mercies, words of love, obedience, opening our mouth to share the gospel.

All of these things in God's providence are put towards Jesus' work of restoring all things. Of restoring the image of God in us. This is a vision of incredible hope and encouragement.

I hope that you're encouraged by it. Because it means that the many small and imperfect things that we do are in Jesus turned into God's strength against his enemies.

Jesus could have established strength in any conceivable way. He could have done it through armies. He could have called down angels to his aid.

[ 22 : 28 ] But it was his will to do it through weakness. He wanted to do it through babies. Through infants. And as we murmur Jesus' name weekly, the majesty of God is unleashed into the world.

Because Jesus loves us and has made us to share his rule forever, he lends us his name. And now we're called Christians. We bear his name.

And he enlists us in his joyful work of calling forth wonder and praise from the earth to his father.

God uses the weak things of the world to overturn the strong.

And as we trust in Jesus, he does the same in us. Praise the Lord. He's made us with purpose. And he makes us perfect in Jesus.

Oh, Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Amen.