

Awesome Wonder!

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm 8. So if you're visiting us, we're doing a series on psalms. We just started, so we're in the early psalm, Psalm 8. And I've called this psalm Awesome Wonder. And we'll read it in a minute, but just a word about awesome. Awesome now is a radically overused word.

But I ordered a cup of coffee in a coffee shop a few weeks ago. And the person, the very nice young woman that took my order, told me it was awesome. I said, you just wait till I order a biscuit as well. That'll knock your socks off, won't it? So awesome means all sorts of things these days. But what we mean when we talk about our awesome God and awesome wonder is something in a different category. Astonishing. Astonishing. I don't know if any of you saw the Northern Lights at all the last couple of nights. One or two of you have. If you didn't, it doesn't matter because you get the same effect from putting a tea towel over your bedside light. So it's absolutely fine. We went out last night. We went to the whole of Hawkeham. I did half of Whitby. And it was foggy. So we all came back.

And then we went down to Sand's End and the other half of Whitby was there. And we didn't see anything there either. So apart from somebody in a house flashing the lights on and off just to try and trick us all. Anyway, I'm sure it was very nice. If you saw it, well done. Well done. Let's have our reading. Josh, please. Little bit small, isn't it there? So, Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory in the heavens.

Through the praise of children and infants, you've established a stronghold against your enemy to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?

Human beings that you care for them. You've made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You've made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet, all flocks and herds and the animals of the wild, the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, all that swims the path of the sea. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Nice little psalm there. Now, when you read psalms, often it has a little introduction, a psalm of praise or a psalm of music or a psalm for the singers or whatever. And I'm calling this a psalm of wow. All right? A psalm of wow.

[3 : 1 1] Goodness me, isn't God good? And it's a wonderful psalm to read, a wonderful psalm to be encouraged by and a wonderful psalm as you just sit and with a cup of tea and look at the words, you think, goodness me, there's a lot in that. Let's have a little bit of a look. How majestic is your name. The name of God, the name of almighty God is majestic and powerful and important that we use it correctly. And I think that I have got used to, so used to, people using the name of God as a sort of throwaway word, really. Sometimes an expletive, but very often it's just a filler.

And what a tragedy that is when we consider the work of his hands, when we consider what he's done, when we consider what he will do. And I'm sure the Northern Lights were very spectacular and some of the pictures are quite extraordinary. The work of God's hands. And there's lots of people telling us all how clever the science is and the science is, of course, very clever. But how majestic is God's name? And as we call on God's name, how powerful that is. How powerful it is to call on the almighty name of God's name. And as we pray, as we cry out to God for our brothers and sisters, for those who are currently on the prayer list, for those who will come on the prayer list this week, as we pray for healing, as we pray for comfort, as we pray for clarity, as we pray for whatever it is, we pray for our Lord. And we must never allow ourselves to be seduced by the dumbing down of who God is.

And it's really easy to be seduced by that. And it's really important that we use Psalm 8 and other Psalms and other parts of Scripture just to remind ourselves that the God we serve, the God we are worshipping this morning, the God who has given us life through His Son, Jesus Christ, is awesome, properly awesome, is majestic, and His name is all-powerful. Wonderful thing to start with.

You've set your glory in the heavens. And again, we can see that. We can see that as we look into the night sky. We can see that as we look out of the window or go on to Westcliff after church and have a look at the wonder of God's creation, the beauty of God's creation. And again, it's really important that we don't lose sight of it. Scripture, particularly the Psalms, but elsewhere, but particularly the Psalms, is full of your creation, God, is wonderful. Reflecting back to God, the astonishing nature of His creation, of the beauty, of the wonder, of the fantastic intricacy of God's creation. If you go and see a bush or a tree in full flower and just focus in on one of the flowers and you see what an astonishing maker, creator we worship. God has established a stronghold against your enemies.

I don't have many enemies. I probably have people that get irritated by me. They're mostly sitting here. But I don't have many enemies, except that I suspect that people are enemies of God, who want to actively do against God. Well, they'll never win. But do you have enemies? Do you have people who want to do you ill?

[7 : 56] Do you have people who want to hurt you? Maybe you do. And that can be really unpleasant and quite scary, quite upsetting, quite off-putting. God's built a tower. God's built a stronghold, a wall around you to protect you from your enemies. And of course, we all have the evil one who is trying to leg us over, who's trying to trip us up, who's trying to steer us off course, who's trying to put us in a place of being against God. And God says, no, no, no, you're mine. You're safe. There's a stronghold.

Paul says, you foolish Galatians, who put you off track? Who knocked you off the straight road?

And what we need to do here is to resolve, to retreat into the stronghold that God has built around us.

That strong tower that we can run into. And the enemies cannot overcome us. It's really important that as we live in a relatively peaceful country, we're not war-torn, we don't lose sight of the fact that there is a battle. And although I don't have lots of people who I would call enemies, I know that the evil one is against me. But God is for me. And God will protect me.

He silences the foe and the avenger. Little joke though, for those of you who are old enough to remember the Avenger cars. He silenced the Avenger, puts a new exhaust pipe on it.

[9 : 55] Some jokes work, some jokes don't. I try, I try. It's okay, we'll leave that one there.

He shuts people up. All the people who just want to say lots of clever, smart things. All the smarty-pants people that come up to you and just give it that.

God silences them. God silences them. Just as when the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus, he knew what they were doing and he gave them a one-word, one-sentence answer that just shut them up.

And made them look to their shoes and think, hmm, he's clever him. He's wise him. He's wise him.

The important thing there is, of course, it's not for us to try and do that. Be still. You only need to be still.

[10 : 59] I will fight for you, says God. We don't have to be the clever ones. We have to point to God.

And God will speak for us. God will silence the foe and the avenger. God will silence the foe and the love of God. And then look at the wonders of God's creation.

Again, the psalmist goes back to that. Just look. Just look. If you are able today while the sun's shining, just look. Look at the wonder, the beauty, the astonishing delicacy of God's creation.

Our God, as we sing in Sunday school, and sometimes we sing here, our God is a great big God. And it's a nice song, but it's a really important truth.

God is big. God is powerful. Okay, next slide, please. A couple of pictures there. When I consider the heavens, the work of your hands.

[12 : 06] There you are. I'll just give you some nice pictures to look at for a minute. Well, let's move on, shall we? And then the psalmist says, well, who am I? And this is a really interesting little break in the psalmist saying, whoa, God, I love your creation.

Look at what you've done. You're awesome. You're powerful. You defend me. You silence the foe and the avenger. Look at all what's happening. And then he goes, who on earth am I?

Why on earth do you count little me as worthy of your time and energy? Because I've just said you're a great big God.

And I'm just little me. Pottering around, doing stuff. Who am I that you're mindful of me? And that takes us into something which is really important in our faith, but also in this psalm.

God is mindful of you today. Whoever you are, whatever you're doing, whatever's going on in your life, in your heart, in your brain, God is mindful of you.

[13 : 24] And he wants to be in conversation with you. He wants to be in relationship with you. He wants to have that intimate knowledge of what's going on and what you want him to do.

And that relationship that we have with God through prayer, that relationship we have with God through the willingness to cry out and say, God, what can you do? is such a precious thing to God, which is remarkable because God is big.

It's one of those things that can easily blow your mind. There are quite a lot of people in this world, certainly more than 20. And he knows and is mindful of each one of them.

And that's too big for my head to work out. It's too big for my head to think, well, if I pray, who am I interrupting? You know, if I'm praying to God and he's listening to me, there'll be somebody who needs God much more than I do, or their situation is much more serious, so maybe I should shut up.

No. God is mindful of each one of us. It's one of those wonderful miracles that you can only accept through faith. And there's one of those wonderful miracles that we just have to take on board.

[14 : 59] God listens and hears and will act on your prayers. Who am I that you care for me? God.

Big God. Creator God. Wonderful God. Cares for you. Cares for the thing that is utmost in your heart and in your mind today.

The concern about family. The concern about friends. The concern about money. The concern about jobs. The concern around health. The concern around whatever.

God cares. He's not only cares, he's fascinated by it. And he wants the best. He made us a little lower than the angels.

Which is really interesting because the angels are the heavenly bodies and we're just a little lower than that. Amazing. Amazing that God just allows us to be that position in his kingdom.

[16 : 14] And that's what he's made us. And not only has he made us that, but he's crowned us with glory and honour. Glory and honour.

You. Do you see what this psalm is doing? This psalm is just saying to you as an individual, God's big. God thinks you're fabulous.

Individually. God is huge and powerful and awesome and creator and all of those things. And you are you.

And God has crowned you with glory and with honour. We read these things and we think, well, yeah, well, there's some nice words there.

This is life-changing. Because however insignificant you might feel, God says something very different.

[17 : 19] God says something very different. And one of the truths that is important for each of us to understand is that none of you are here today by accident.

God ordained it. And you're here because he wanted you to sing the songs that we're singing. He wanted maybe even to listen to what I was saying.

But he also might want you here so you can have a conversation with somebody, smile at somebody, encourage somebody, listen to somebody.

That's how significant you are in God's kingdom and in God's economy. And he's crowned you with glory and honour. And we are the rulers of all God's creation.

Let's just move on, shall we, Josh? And even the smallest, weakest, youngest count, I'm not sure that's a very good title really, but it was the words that I came up with. And Psalm 8 too, I use the NIV as we do on Sunday mornings, but I turned to the Revised Standard Version and my Bible as I was given in 1979 as a crusader.

[18 : 43] And the Psalm 8, verse 2, in the Revised Standard Version, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you have ordained strength. You might feel very little.

You might feel that you have no real wisdom or ability or knowledge or skill or whatever. out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you have ordained strength.

He has given you strength. And he has spoken strength to the world through you. It's a lovely little verse there.

No one is insignificant to God. Okay, which is great. But we have responsibility. So let's come back to this idea of through the praise of children and infants you've established, and then it goes on to say what he's established.

Praise. We, on a Sunday morning, come and we sing some nice songs and we have a very, very skilled set of musicians and singers that help us sing songs.

[19 : 56] and we praise God. We worship God. But our whole life needs to be a praise to God.

And I find this really challenging because sometimes if it's dark in the morning and it's raining and it's cold and I have to get up and maybe I have to get up quite early to drive somewhere for work, is my life full of praise or is my life a little bit more grumpy?

And sometimes it's grumpy. Sometimes when somebody asks me to do something and I'm tired or I'm busy, I can be grumpy.

Now that's I guess not unusual. But what God wants from us is a lifestyle of praise.

And there's the practice of praise, the practice of waking up and saying to God first thing, thank you God for a new day. And Scripture says His mercies to me are new every morning.

[21 : 23] What an astonishing thing. I wake up like the rest of you wake up and each of us receive new mercies that morning from God. Yesterday's gone, tomorrow's coming, sufficient unto the day are the troubles therein.

And all the mercies that I receive today are new today. But we just need that lifestyle of praise as we go through the day.

Have you seen that, God? Thank you God for making that whatever. We have at home an abundance, I would say, of dandelions.

They're very resilient. And if I try and mow them down with a lawnmower, they duck. And as soon as I put the lawnmower away, they stick their heads up again and say, ha ha, you missed me, didn't you?

Quite extraordinary, really. They're very, very clever, dandelions. But even dandelions are beautiful. Menace as well, but beautiful.

[22 : 34] Do we say thank you to God for His creation? Do we have a lifestyle of praise? Do we have a lifestyle that establishes God's kingdom through the praise of Him who created all things?

And then one which has quite a lot going on in it. You have made us rulers over all the flocks and herds, the animals of the wild, the birds of the sky, the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the sea.

We have been made rulers over creation. And that gives us a very, very, very significant responsibility.

And I don't want to get into, certainly not into politics, that's too hard, but I don't want to get into any sort of controversy. But what seems to me clear from Scripture, what seems to me clear from this passage, and what seems to me clear from elsewhere, is that we have a responsibility not to destroy God's world.

We have a responsibility to protect God's creation. And that's hard. That's something which we need to wrestle with ourselves.

[23 : 55] Because certainly for me, I drive a car. Is that a helpful thing or not a helpful thing? in God's creation?

Well, it's a thing thing. We have to be wise. We have to be intelligent. But we have a responsibility to God's creation. All the flocks and herds, the animals in the wild, the birds of the sky, the fish in the sea that swim the paths of the sea.

And if you see some of the documentaries about what's happening to God's creation, sometimes I wonder whether we're taking that responsibility seriously enough and whether we're speaking out enough about God's creation that we have responsibility for and rule over.

So, Psalm 8. Quite a short psalm. fairly straightforward in its understanding of the words, profound in its depth.

But we finish where we started. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

[25 : 23] Amen.