

St John United Church of Christ
Rev. Barbara Lohrbach
June 3, 2007

Psalm 8

“Crowned with Glory”

¹*O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.*

²*Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.*

³*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;*

⁴*what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?*

⁵*Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.*

⁶*You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,*

⁷*all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,*

⁸*the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

⁹*O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

I wonder what the psalmist was seeing when these words were written.

Was he looking at a night sky filled with stars?

Was he looking at storm clouds on the horizon?

Was he looking into the face of his new born child?

Or am I being presumptuous to think he was seeing at all?

Awe and wonder are expressed in the few short verses of this praise hymn.

Are we “awed” by anything today as this writer so clearly was?

You, O God, are so majestic, so glorious. From the babbling of babies you have established such strength that the enemy and the avenger are silenced. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, O God, the moon, the stars...who am I, a human being, that you care for me? Who are you and I...that God should care?

The psalmist believes that God has made us, humankind, just a little lower than God and crowned us, humankind, with honor and glory. “Creation,” according to Simone Weil’s famous dictum, “was the moment when God ceased to be everything, so we humans could become something.”

That sometimes gets us into trouble...the impulse to arrogance...to do exactly as we please...or to do absolutely nothing at all. That is also within all of us. This is that awesome and awful gift of free will.

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We are made in the spiritual image of God. We partake of God's character and fellowship. We are wonderfully made...and our glory is in our humanity—and in all our variations of culture or color or gender or orientation or ability.

Endowed with the freedom of choice, we may descend to the lowest hell or rise to the highest heaven. And sometimes we must go to hell in order to rise to heaven. In us, as human beings, ride the hopes of a Creator—that we might show others purpose and meaning and value through this earthly life. And sometimes others learn from the poor choices we make.

This is no small set of expectations God has set for us. And we know that history tells us how often humankind has missed the mark...fallen short of the glory of God...in two words—we failed. And we will do so again. And the wonder and miracle of the Gospel is God becoming flesh, becoming human.

The awe and wonder the writer of Psalm 8 found...we find it in Jesus, the one who was willing to risk it all, to show us that God is exactly what the Psalmist says, “our sovereign God, our supreme God.”

I love this Psalm. I love the awe and mystery of this God we serve. I love the fact that God did not tell us everything in neat and tidy volumes of “how to live.” I love the ambiguities and the gray areas. Well, to be honest, on most days I love those things about God. Some days I long for a book that says do this and this and this. But then I realize how awful it would be to live in a world of robotic beings.

I trust the grace and mercy of God to be lover of the very humanity that often frustrates. I, God's human creation, am a little lower than God, but I am not God. I do not have to have all the answers.

A colleague of mine said that a parishioner said to her, “If you, the pastor, don't have the answers, what good are you?” That has been a troubling place in her journey...she is a good pastor, but doubts herself because she can't give all the right answers to life's questions. My friends, we don't have to have all the answers. We are called to love...love with all our heart, love our neighbors, love ourselves, and yes, love our enemies. That is the word of the gospel according to Jesus, whom God sent that we might have an example of how a human being can rise to the highest and best that God intends for each of us.

God goes with us to help us. How? I can't explain it, but I know it's there. When our son, David, was born, I never imagined the depth of love that a child could

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bring out of me. When Sarah came along, I thought how can I love another child as much as I love David.

Love shared becomes love multiplied. When you love, the love increases, grows, expands. That's what the writer of Psalm 8 was expressing about God. When God loves, the love multiplies. Does God love me more than you or you more than me? No. It is like having multiple children in a family. Each one is unique and brings to the family their own special qualities.

A number of years ago when I was beginning a journey that ultimately brought me to pastoral ministry, I was introduced to the writings of Frederick Buechner, a theologian of the 20th century. Buechner's gift was an ability to bring clarity to words and phrases of the language we use in church to talk about God, scripture and religious life...theological ABC's. His word for C is Creation. This short pithy paragraph was a moment of transformation in my life and my thinking about God and even more so, about me.

Using the same old materials of earth, air, fire, and water, every twenty-four hours God creates something new out of them. If you think you're seeing the same show all over again seven times a week, you're crazy. Every morning you wake up to something that in all eternity never was before and never will be again. And the you that wakes up was never the same before and will never be the same either.

Frederick Buechner
Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC

"The you that wakes up was never the same before and will never be the same either." I have another chance. Today I am a new creation. Every day I am different than the day before. I am not in a rut...unless I choose to be there. God does not think I am. Every day is another chance to make the world a better place...to visit the sick and imprisoned, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked to love the ones the world would cast out.

Who are we? We are children of God, loved by God, made new every day by God's love. We are differently abled...not disabled. We have something the world needs to hear. We are a little lower than God, crowned with God's glory and honor...and we are loved. I can see the resemblance, do you?