

*“A God of Wonder and the People of God”*

Psalm 8

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An Adult Education class was studying the different faiths of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. A rabbi was speaking about the things Christianity and the Jewish faith share in common and the points where we differ. By this time in the discussion, most of us Christians were feeling just a little testy, to be quite honest. “Jews believe in one God, we worship one God” she said, (yes, the rabbi was female) “whereas Christians believe in the Trinity – God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How can one God be three persons? Why don’t you say you worship three Gods? We just don’t understand that.” By that time, my defensiveness was hooked and I responded, “We may not understand God as three persons but we believe it.” It was not one of my better comebacks.

As I replayed the conversation over in my mind the next few days, I asked myself, “Why did you say that?” Why didn’t you explain that we believe in one God that we EXPERIENCE as three persons, almost in three different roles as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Why didn’t you explain that it is one God – one substance – that has its being in three different ways just as water – one substance – can have its being as liquid, steam or ice yet it is all the same substance in three different forms? Why didn’t you say that?!!! I didn’t say all that because even though I knew it I didn’t think of it in the heat of the moment. “At least you spoke the truth,” I reminded myself as small consolation. “We may not understand God as three persons but we believe it.”

Today is Trinity Sunday. Earlier we sang, “God in three persons, blessed Trinity.” How can one God be three persons? We sing what our minds cannot grasp.

Psalm 8, today’s scripture lesson, is another example of singing what our minds cannot grasp. It is quite fitting that Psalm 8 and the Trinity are grouped together this Sunday. Psalm 8, attributed to King David, was written as a song of praise to the mystery and wonder of God’s holiness.

Imagine King David, attributed with writing this psalm, gazing at a star filled sky and luminous moon one night. He would not have dealt with competing lights from the city or a blinking, moving star that turned out to be an airplane. Imagine stars too numerous to count and a moon shining so brightly David could see the area around him. Have you ever gazed at a sky like that? “When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established, . . .” what do you surmise about God viewing the expanse of night sky? Are you filled with a sense of wonder and awe over God’s handiwork?

King David, without the benefit of modern science, had no idea he was gazing at the Milky Way Galaxy. He had no way of knowing he was viewing only a minute portion of a galaxy that encompasses 400 billion stars and that it would take approximately 5000 light years to travel from one end of the galaxy to the other end and that this galaxy is only one of billions in the sky. Being armed with scientific facts helps us articulate the realities of creation not necessarily understand such vastness any better. Scientific facts may even further emphasize the majesty and awesomeness of the One who created it. It certainly illustrates one truth, God is so great and we are so small. No wonder David observing God’s awesome majesty in the night sky questioned, “what are human beings that you are mindful of them?” In other words, “what makes you continue to love us, God, knowing who we are, knowing the smallness of our minds?” “What

are human beings that you are mindful of them” is not a question to be answered, it is the answer. We cannot fully grasp “why” God does this, we simply know it to be true and find ourselves the objects of God’s affection. What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? We respond with a whispered “thank you” and an awestruck “Wow!”

A widower was having an extremely difficult time grieving the loss of his wife. Adjusting to life without her had not become any easier and he was not entirely convinced life was worth living. He shared his anguish with God, asking for help as he did not think he could continue to go on. While calling a friend one evening he “*accidentally*” dialed the wrong number. The woman who answered was helpful and very gracious about his mistake. The conversation continued. “You sound so nice,” would you be willing to meet me for coffee?” he asked. She agreed to meet in a safe, public place. That initial phone call led to other conversations which led to sharing about their lives over shared meals which led to marriage. Married now for several years, the husband is quite adamant God’s care for him as he despaired is evident in the answered prayer he received. Putting someone in your life when one is lonely is only one way God cares for us.

Some of you have heard me share this story before. While driving to work one day years ago, I struck a bird that flew in front of my car. I saw the bird lying in the road in my rearview mirror. “Please God, don’t let him suffer, let him die soon,” I prayed. I immediately realized that had been my prayer at my father’s bedside the last days of his fight against cancer. Grief instantly enveloped me. My next thought was Jesus’ words about the birds of the air that neither sow nor reap yet are fed by God. “Are you not of more value than they?” Jesus asks. In that very moment, I knew God cared for me and cared about my grief.

Reminding us of God's promises in scripture is only one way God cares for us.

The incomprehensible vastness of creation proves God can do "BIG" and the intimately personal ways God cares for us demonstrates God can also do "small." Who are we that God cares for us? Each of us answers that question for ourselves. If truth be told, we do not have to understand it to believe it, we step out in faith to believe it. And as Psalm 8 demonstrates, "We do not have to understand it in order to give God praise."

"O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Amen.