

“A Word About God”

Psalm 8

Today is Trinity Sunday; a day set to speak a word about God. That is, a day to say a word specifically about God’s own self; God’s own nature. In speaking this word, I’m expanding on something I wrote a couple of weeks ago in a Daily Devotional about Psalm 8. For our Psalm lesson, Psalm Eight, tells us just what to speak about God this morning; with some help from a fairly recent development in academia, called interdisciplinary studies.

Let me explain. Our most major academic research universities now strongly encourage students to combine disparate fields of study in the common search for new knowledge. And, they offer strong incentives for doing this.

For instance, a music major graduates simultaneously with a second major in neuroscience, and then goes on to get a PhD combining the research power of both fields to show how music changes the human brain to increase intelligence. What practical difference could that make? Well, just this: if you really want to improve overall student scores in our public schools, invest in a strong music program that includes everyone. Music lessons and performance make students smarter, and improve grades in everything else.

Or, a Philosophy major simultaneously graduates with a second major in physics. Then, in pursuit of a graduate degree in Theology, shows how the seemingly conscious behavior of sub-atomic particles can argue for a conscious mind pervading the Universe. What difference could that make? Consider: that is a rational argument for the existence of a Divine consciousness binding the Universe. In both cases those student’s universities awarded them one of their most coveted titles: Renaissance Scholar. Therein lies the beauty of this interdisciplinary

approach. It is science and the humanities playing nice; working together to expand human knowledge.

Well, Psalm 8 has this same interdisciplinary approach when it comes to what it says about God. So, let's take that approach with our Psalmist this morning, and see what it has to say to us about God. And let us start where the Psalmist does in verses one and three, with theology and astronomy.

“O LORD, our sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens...When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established...” (v.3)

Picture the psalmist, outside at night on a Palestinian hillside. Black skies are pierced by stars in a way that most of us have rarely ever seen. He is just stunned; stunned into worship and reflection.

Think, if God's glory has been set above the heavens, then imagine God's astonishing glory given how almost incomprehensibly vast our universe really is. Consider:

- If our solar system, sun and eight planets, (well, maybe nine, depending on what you want to do with Pluto,) were the size of a quarter, that would make our galaxy the size of the entire continent of North America. From the southern tip of Mexico to the northernmost Arctic reaches of Canada; with our quarter-sized solar system lost somewhere at an edge.
- If you were to then count the stars in our galaxy, one per second, it would take 2,500 years to count them all.
- Consider, then, that our Milky Way galaxy is only one of at least 200 billion galaxies in the Universe. That's incomprehensibly vast.

Now consider this: in contrast to how big God is, our vast universe is tiny. After all, as we're told, God's fingers (v. 3) push the stars into their places. Isaiah tells us that God's massive hands are billions of light years wide, holding the heavens in his palms (Isaiah 40:12). God even numbers the trillions of stars, speaking each of their names as God counts (Psalm 147:4). Now, of course, we all realize that this is what we call anthropomorphic language. God doesn't actually have hands and fingers. But it's the only way we can begin to wrap our minds around just how majestic God really is. That's the interdisciplinary thought the Psalmist would have us see this morning through theology and astronomy.

Now let's look at the small picture. And let's follow the Psalmist with the use of physics and anthropology, and philosophy. If God is that big, then what is God doing paying any attention to something as small as you and me?

"What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (v.4)

If the Solar System is that quarter somewhere in North America, then our DMV region is less than a molecule of dust on it. And you and I are barely a quark in one atom of that dust. Forget the telescopes. Forget the microscopes; we're nowhere to be found. Given this comparative sizing, how heart-stopping is the realization that God is mindful of, and caring toward, each of us quarks in that dust atom on our quarter?

While God counts and names the trillions of stars, God goes so much further with you and me. God knows what makes each of us tick, hears our prayers when we cry out, and cares about each one of us. Are you beginning to feel the awe, the wonder? All that exists, and God pays attention to you and me.

That's how this interdisciplinary approach to knowledge awes us, and makes us mindful of the wonder of God. In just this way we are stunned with the hillside psalmist into pure theology.

“Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.” (v.5)

Who are we mortals? Beings blessed and beloved; made in the image of God. Part of infusing us with the Imago Dei, the image of God, means that you and I carry a functional likeness to God; by creating, cultivating, filling the earth, and exercising sovereignty. Nothing else in all creation got this responsibility.

This psalm reminds us of our uniqueness; our divinely invested value; the glory given us by the Glorious One; our purpose in the sweep of all of time and space. This psalm gives God God's place and places us in our place. God is our Sovereign: creating all, ordaining all, and bigger than all we can see or even imagine. That is our word about God this morning.

So what does all this mean for you and me, we students of this interdisciplinary method?

First, it means this: God is bigger than we can describe, and we just aren't that big a deal in the grand scheme. In essence, we are significant for our insignificance.

But, second, it means this: when we see things in their proper order, as the Psalmist does this morning, first God, then us, we remember how valuable everything really is. Including you, including us all.

And third, and most importantly, it means this: that value and worthiness, when you and I finally get that fact that we are all of value

and worthy, because our Creator says so, that awareness drives us to reach out and lift up every other person and even creature. That drives us to work together, to march together, to stand together, to create a new human order, a new world where no one is denied their God ordained value and status and love as a personal creation of God. And it drives us to heal and save this part of God's creation: our nation, and this Earth, our fragile island home.

All this awareness inspires our awe and wonder. Let that awe, that wonder, drive you to reach out, and together create, recreate this nation, this world, in that image of God.

Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic will be your name in all the Earth!