

Prayer: Praise and Thanksgiving

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Date: 10 November 2024

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[0 : 00] Psalm 8. This is God's word. For the director of music, according to the Gittith, the Psalm of David. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

You have set your glory in the heavens through the prayers of children and infants. You have established a stronghold against your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You 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 in the sky and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. This is God's word and we do give thanks for the privilege we have every week of being here and it read and proclaimed to each of us.

[1 : 16] I understand you all are in a series on prayer. Maybe you didn't know you were in a series on prayer, but Robin told me you were.

And today we're going to talk about prayers that Christians for centuries have prayed, the prayers of praise and thanksgiving, prayers of showing gratitude, of praising the Lord for who He is and what He's done and us expressing that with our words.

But it may be weird to, I don't know how many of you were raised as Christians or are new to the faith, or maybe you're curious about the faith, or you've got friends it might be. Wherever you are on the spectrum, it may be strange to think you're going to thank this being, this entity, the Trinitarian God, you're going to thank Him even when you can't see Him.

And that may sound like a strange thing for people watching the church. So what do we mean? Why do Christians, why are we called to say prayers of gratitude, prayers of thanksgiving, and prayers of praise?

Well, like children that we just saw, if you're a parent or you have kids, we try to teach them to say thank you, even if they feel it on the inside. Hey, it's good for you to say thank you after someone gives you a treat or gives you something.

[2 : 32] Hey, say thank you, say thank you, say thank you. I have to say that 800 times a day to my five kids, because we're trying to train them, teach them, hey, it's good for you to express your gratitude to the one who has blessed you.

It's good for the entity that has received the blessing, and your mouth and your words, it's good for you to say thank you. Praise and thanksgiving has to do with this biblical idea of worship, and worship is another Christian-sounding word.

We sing songs of worship, but that's not the only way to worship God. The word worship comes from the old English worth-ship, which is you deciding, hey, that thing over there has worth to me. It's worth something to me. So I want to express that that has worth to me. So we worship things all the time. We worship good food. We worship a football club.

We worship new technology. That thing is worth something to me, and I want to express the fact that I feel like that thing over there has worth to me, and I'm going to express it.

[3 : 39] The Psalms are full of Psalms of worth-ship, just declaring to the Lord in praise and thanksgiving, you are worthy. You have worth to me, and I'm thankful, and I'm grateful, and I'm praising you for what you've done.

So Psalm 8 is the psalm we're going to look at that does that. It's a well-known psalm. We sang it. Robin led us in singing it. We read it. I will reread it.

It's only nine verses. It's not too long to bore us too much. Again, this is on page 546. This is Psalm 8. Let's reread it to re-familiarize ourselves with it, this psalm, this song, this prayer of praise from David.

Psalm 8 for the director of music, according to Giddeth, the psalm of David. 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 have established a stronghold against your enemies to silence the foe and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them?

[4 : 55] Human beings that you care for them. You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You 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 in the sky and the fish in the sea, all that swim in the paths of the sea. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

It's the word of the Lord. Amen. So I'm not sure if you caught it in the reading of it, but the first and the last line of that psalm are the exact same. Verse 1 and verse 9 are the exact same.

That's a Hebrew writing technique called an inclusio, which is like a sandwich, but it's basically telling you, hey, everything in between these two lines is about this theme.

And what is that theme? What is verse 1 and what is verse 9? It is the Lord is majestic. He's full of majesty. He's royal. He's deserving of worth because of His majesty.

[5 : 53] He deserves to be adored and revered. He deserves to be praised. And what does David, the writer of the psalm, what is he telling us is the reason, the primary reason, why the Lord is majestic.

The first thing he tells us is verse 3. I see your heavens, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place. David is commenting on what the Lord has made.

So here's what David's saying. When you, at night, I'm guessing out in Windberg, you can see, like at night you can see the stars pretty clear. Sometimes. In Nashville you can't really.

But out in the countryside, if you can see the stars and the moon, David is saying, when you look up at the stars and even the planets that you can see, the Lord set all those in their place. Some of that, we kind of say that, and maybe if you believe that God created the world, which we do, and the Bible says that, it's still kind of lost on us because it's so far away and there's so many stars in the sky.

It kind of, it's just kind of up there and we don't really think about it. But I want to try to comprehend this for a minute. Okay? Let me give you a little picture of how vast the universe is.

[7 : 02] When David says this, this is what he's saying, that he has set the moon and the stars in their place. So our planet is in a galaxy, or is in a solar system, which is in a galaxy called the Milky Way galaxy.

You've heard of this? Yes? Our solar system, in Scotland do they teach that we have eight planets or nine planets? Eight. Sometimes, Pluto was a planet and then it wasn't and now it is again.

Did that happen in America? Is that true in Scotland too? I think right now it's a planet. So we have nine planets in our solar system, which is in the Milky Way galaxy. And so here's the size, the scope of our galaxy, the Milky Way galaxy.

If Europe was the size of the Milky Way galaxy, like if that's the comparison, then our solar system of our nine planets would be the size of a coffee cup compared to our galaxy.

And then Earth would be like a speck inside the coffee cup. So to what the galaxy that we live in, the Milky Way galaxy, is like Europe and our solar system is like a coffee cup and our planet is like a speck in that coffee cup.

[8 : 14] So our little Earth is like a speck in the continent of Europe. And David's saying, the Lord made all that. Not only did the Lord make all that, look at what he says about how the Lord made all that.

That's the vastness of the Lord. But then David wants to show you how vast he is by showing you how he made it. Look at verse 3 again. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers. I think NIV says it a little bit differently.

When I consider your heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place. The work of your fingers. Every commentator, every scholar on this passage would tell you, David does not say the work of your arm or the work of your hand.

He says the work of your fingers. Meaning in the vast galaxy of which the Milky Way galaxy is one of like a billion galaxies. But even the ones that, like in our little corner of the universe, that galaxy that's the size of Europe and that coffee cup and that speck that is our planet, the Lord made it all with His fingers.

That's the vastness that David wants us to see. The vastness of the stars and the moon and the galaxies. All of that is tiny compared to the Lord.

[9 : 32] He made it with His fingers. So, let me ask you this question. In comparison to that God, the vastness of that God who made the Milky Way and our solar system and our coffee cup and our speck, in comparison to Him, how big do you feel?

How big does your life feel? How big does your story feel? How big do your problems feel? How big does your income feel? How big does your importance feel to you when you compare it to the size of the Lord who made all that with His fingers?

See, the first thing that David wants us to understand is that this psalm is meant to right-size you. It's meant to give you a picture of how small you are.

And no philosopher or astrophysicist can save you from how small this psalm and the universe would make you feel. When you behold the stars at night, when you look at nature, when you feel the size of the stars and the scope of it, you ought to feel insignificant.

And so David asks this question, what is mankind kind, in verse 4? And it's not really like he's, it's like he's in a counseling session with a therapist.

[10 : 51] Like, I feel really small right now. What is man? How big is mankind? When I look at all this, I feel like nothing. And I know that this is hard to swallow, but that feeling of nothingness, that feeling of insignificance, that feeling of, I'm just a speck inside a speck in a coffee cup in Europe.

The Bible doesn't mind making you feel that small. It's not actually trying to save you from feeling that tiny. Because of our smallness, compared to the Lord's grandness, He's majestic.

He is full of majesty. And so if that's the size difference between us and the Lord who made this vast universe with His fingers, and we are small, it would not make sense that your next thought would be that that vast Lord cares at all about the specks inside the speck inside the coffee cup in Europe.

But David goes one step further. This is where his praise of the Lord turns into gratitude to the Lord. Because David has this moment of wholly reflecting and he wants us to join Him in it.

He turns his smallness into a spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Look at verse 4. This is the central verse in the whole passage. What is mankind that you are mindful of them?

[12 : 20] Human beings that you care for them. In light of all this vastness, Lord, why are you mindful of us? That word mindful is an interesting word.

We maybe use it and don't really think about what it means. But literally what that word means and what David is saying about the Lord in relationship to us is that his mind, this vast God, his mind is full of thoughts of us.

Lord, why? Why do we fill your mind? Why are you mindful of us? We're nothing. We're dust. And on top of that, we're not just dust in comparison to the size of him.

We're dust that has rebelled against him. That has thought we're bigger than him. We're dust that has betrayed you. And yet, you think of us.

We're on your mind. Your mind is full of thoughts of us. Here's what that means. Literally and actually, the Lord spends time with us at the forefront of his thinking.

[13 : 35] We're on his heart. We're on his mind. He ponders us when making decisions about the universe. He has orchestrated history from eternity past and who he set it up to be good for was us.

Do you know how deeply, like in your heart, in my heart, we want other people to be mindful of us. We all want other people to be thinking about us.

It's kind of our ego problem. Like when you leave an interaction with someone and you go back home after work or after meeting them for coffee or a drink, you're kind of thinking, man, I wonder what they're thinking about me.

And guess what they're thinking about? Man, I kind of want the person I just met with to be thinking about me. And so neither one of you is actually thinking about the other. You're thinking about you. Because really what we want is everyone else to be thinking about us.

We want other people to be mindful of us. We want our bosses. We want our networks. We want our family. We want our in-laws. We want people to think of us.

[14:41] We want them to think that we're special. We want them to think that we're unique. We want them to think that we have great ideas. We want them to think that we are important. Do you realize that with all of that energy we use up here hoping that other people are thinking about us?

Do you realize how wonderful and freeing, liberating it is to be told that the Lord is thinking of you? The Lord is mindful of you? Who cares if your boss thinks of you when the Lord is thinking of you? Who cares if the person who you want to love you back romantically is thinking of you if the Lord is thinking of you? Who cares if anyone thinks of me if the Lord of the universe is mindful of me? Then he goes on. It gets better. Verse 5 and 6, not only is the Lord thinking of us, what he's done for us in verse 5 and 6, here's how he's set us up on this little speck in the coffee cup.

You have made them, that's us, mankind, a little lower than the angels and crown them with glory and honor. You have made them rulers over the works of your hands.

[15:59] You put everything under their feet. We don't have time to go into all that. That's referring back to Genesis 1, God's original intention for man and woman to take dominion over the earth and we could talk about that for a while but here's what that means simply.

It's not just that the Lord is mindful of you, he has a plan for you. He has a purpose for you. In his kingdom, the works of his hands he has set you over. It's like the king has called you into his royal courts and you're like, why am I in the king's courts?

I don't belong here. He's like, well I've been thinking about you. My mind's been full of you. Like, why have you been thinking about me? He's like, I actually have a job for you. I actually am commissioning you out. I want you to work in my kingdom.

You're a speck in a coffee cup and yet the Lord thinks of you. That's what David would say about the Lord in this psalm.

Like, can you imagine, like, in all this right sizing and in all of this we are specks of dust and he is the creator of the cosmos, not only is he mindful of us, but he has a purpose and a plan for you.

[17:08] That's what David wants us to see. That is meant to create in us prayers and songs of praise and thanksgiving. But then it gets even better because here's what David knew a little bit, but we actually can know a lot of it.

Is it not only did David know the Lord has thought of him, David didn't know just how far the Lord would go to think of his people. See, because when he uses that Hebrew word care, what is human beings that you care about them?

That word actually means this, like the full expression of that word is like when you go visit someone who's at the hospital who's sick and needy, like it means to like I don't just care about you and think about you, it means like I move myself to come and visit you.

I like go out to make sure you're okay. I like get off of my seat and I come to see you where you are. And David says to the Lord, you care about us, you visited us, you attend us.

Now David's thinking about the tabernacle where the Lord's spirit has dwelled, like he dwells with the Israelites in the tabernacle. David didn't know just how true that would become though. The Lord would visit us.

[18:19] Because in the New Testament, thousand years or so after David, the Lord wouldn't just visit them in spirit at the temple, the Lord would actually come in the person of Jesus.

He would visit them with his flesh. He would come to take care of them. He was so mindful of his people, he came and visited them in the person of Jesus.

When we reread Psalm 8, after you know the story of Jesus, it actually can begin to make a little bit of sense of the strange verse 2 in this psalm.

It's a strange verse. Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies. That doesn't make any sense.

What is David talking about? Through the praise of children and infants. One of the things David's saying, and that is, Lord, you always seem to work stuff out through ways that don't make any sense.

[19:19] You always do things, and the Old Testament is full of these stories, like David defeats Goliath. How does the shepherd boy defeat the giant? How do the Israelite slaves cross the Red Sea?

You always do things, and it's always upside down. It doesn't quite fit in the categories. That's kind of what David's saying in verse 2. But for us, out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies.

Once you know the story of Jesus, here's what he's saying. Actually, through the mouth of a baby, he would defeat his enemy. Jesus would come as a baby to an unwed teenage mother in a manger outside Bethlehem.

And everything about Jesus' life was upside down. He didn't come for power. He came to give away power. He didn't come to rule. He came to serve. Everything was upside down.

And ultimately, this creator of the cosmos who created it with his fingers, who came as a baby to silence the avenger, silence the enemy of God, death, that creator let human beings who were specks in a coffee cup crucify him.

[20 : 30] And on the cross, he could have called down angels. He could have called down his armies to get off the cross of pain. But he didn't.

Why would the creator with his fingers come and let his hands be crucified? Because he was mindful of you. Because he wanted to come and visit you and give you what you needed.

You so fill his mind that he came to find you. And you so fill his heart that he was willing to die for you. He became weak and he actually emptied his majesty for us.

He put on flesh and blood to come to the little speck in the coffee cup. The God who set the stars and moon and sun and place, the one who rules over all, he considered you.

He was mindful of you. He became dust for you. So, if you don't know this Jesus, if you just hear the story about Jesus, let me ask this question.

[21 : 41] How does knowing the story of Jesus, can you at least begin to see how a Christian might go, oh, you actually deserve to be worshipped. It's good for me to say thank you to you and express my gratitude to you.

Or maybe just as this psalm closes, tell me how you feel about this psalm if you know the story of Jesus. Oh, Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

He has attended to us, he has visited us, and we fill his mind still. So, let's pray and let's thank him, show gratitude for who he is. Jesus, we're specks in a coffee cup.

We have no business being on your mind. And yet, in the person of Jesus, in the work of Jesus, who came as a baby to silence the enemy and the avenger, Lord, you show us just how much you think of us.

You show us just how much you care for us. And so, Jesus, in a moment, even just for like ten seconds right now, would we have a moment of like clarity and sanity and reality to show you gratitude with our words and our song, to praise you, to say thank you to you for who you are and what you've done for us, these little specks of dust.

[23 : 06] Thank you for becoming dust for us. Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the tomb. Thank you that you think of us, Jesus, in your name. Amen.