Sermon AMC- The Majesty Over all Majesties

Scripture: Ps 8 Sunday, June 11, 2017

Last Sunday, we celebrated the day of Pentecost. The birth of the church. That resets the church calendar and we begin a new journey today. Today, we are going to look at a passage that begins with a beautiful praise Psalm. Psalm 8. I find Psalm 8 fascinating because it is one of those Psalms that gives us the vocabulary to praise God on a divine scale and that is not easy for us humans to do without God’s help. So let’s enter into the world that this Psalm is opening for us and see what we can discover in the end of the process.

The Psalm opens with this declaration, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name on all the earth!”. A declaration of the grandeur and majesty of the name of God over the entire earth. But no sooner has the psalmist declared this, than we realize that earth was just a take off point because by the next phrase we are immediately taken beyond the earth even by declaring, “you have set your glory above the heavens”. The word heaven here is referring to the dwelling place of God and his angels. In other words, the Psalmist is saying, you have set your glory above the dwelling place of the heavenly beings. And that brings us to a fascinating issue. How does this person know or speak so confidently on what is going on in heaven? We will come back to this a little later. For now let’s just keep examining the Psalm.

The next verse says this, “you have taught children and infants to tell of your strength, silencing your enemies and all who oppose you”. What does this mean? Well I believe it has at least three layers of means. Firstly, it means God does have enemies. And God’s enemies are spirit beings who oppose God and his will. And how does God choose to fight his enemies? He uses the weakest beings you can think of. The word used for infant can be translated as a suckling child and in those days, infants were suckled up to 3 years. So who does God employ to silence his enemies and stop them in their tracks? A bunch of three year old babies? So what is this all about, right? So the first level of meaning is that when the Psalmist compares the power of God’s enemies with God’s power, the comparison seems ridiculous because God can stop His enemies in their tracks using the weakest beings on earth, even children under 3 years old.

Now there is a second, prophetic dimension as well. You see in Matt 21:16 when Jesus makes his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, there are children standing right there in the temple courts and shouting, “Hosanna to the son of David”. And the temple authorities are really irritated and angry. They want Jesus to stop these children right away. But in response Jesus does something very interesting. Jesus quotes Psalm 8 verse 2 but he quotes this verse in its Greek translation called the Septuagint that was widely used at that time. And that translation renders Psalm 8:2 as “out of the mouths of babes and suckling infants you have ordained praise”. Now you will say, these two renderings of this verse seems quite different. But when you think of it, it is not that different because in our English translations the babes are stopping the enemy in their tracks. In the Greek translation they are praising God. Think about this, how are little babies stopping the enemy in its tracks, simply by praising God. Now Psalm 8:2 is prophetic meaning because it was pointing forward to a time when little babes would stop God’s enemy in its tracks and that prophesy was fulfilled when Jesus entered the temple and the babes started crying out, hosanna and the temple authorities could do nothing about it. So when verse two is saying “babes and suckling infants will stop the enemy in its tracks” it is actually declaring a prophesy.

Now when this verse refers to babies there is a third dimension, the metaphorical dimension as well. Metaphorically it means that, when God fights his enemy he only needs to use the weakest force he can find. You see this over and over again. In the Old Testament, the battle between David and Goliath is something like this. When the Philistines bring out this giant of a fighting monster, God opposes him with a shepherd boy who was too young to serve in the regular army. David was practically an infant in front of Goliath. When the inexperienced and ill equipped Israelites had to do against the fortified city of Jericho, he used a bunch of trumpet blasts to bring down the great defenses of the city of Jericho. That battle was almost like child’s play. All the way to the end of the story, in the ultimate battle of Armageddon, when the forces of evil are all gathered together to fight the scariest battle the earth has ever seen, God simply shows up and the battle is over. God only needs to use a tiny baby strength to put his enemies in their place. That is the power of God and that is what verse 2 of Psalm 8 wants us to be thinking about when we praise God for his power.

When we move to the next section of this Psalm there is another aspect of God’s power that is on display here. See the Psalmist is saying, when I look at all the things that God has created, specifically when he looks at the cosmic dimension and then looks at the human being, the Psalmist wonders why God would bother about human beings at all! Let’s think about that for a moment. You see, before telescopes very invented, people used to think that the Milky Way galaxy was the whole extent of the universe and they though that it consisted of 6000 stars. Now, if you have ever stared out at the night sky on a clear dark night, what you see with your naked eye is truly spectacular and extremely humbling. Today we know that what you can see with your naked eyes is like one grain of sand as compared to the world’s beaches literally. Because when human beings were able to peer into the universe through the Hubble telescope, the telescope positioned in space outside the earth’s atmosphere and light pollution, we realized that actually there are about a 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone and our Milky Way galaxy is just one of about 2000 billion galaxies. So when people today look up at the night sky and contemplate the vastness of what is out there, the first thought that comes to my mind is, who am I but the tiniest speck in this extremely vast universe. Maybe people thing we are just random accidental creatures that happen to evolve from lower life forms for no specific purpose. And that is exactly what the author of Ps 8 is asking in verse 3. He says, “When I consider your heavens, 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?”. But then our Psalmist looks again at human beings and realizes that He has done something equally amazing with human beings. Why he has somehow conferred a status on human beings that is only a little lower than Himself. He has given human beings the assignment of ruling over everything that God has created, all the flocks and herds, the animals of the wild, the fish in the sea everything. And for giving us human beings, who are just a tiny speck in God’s vast universe, who were created from dust and end as dust as well, this incredible status we need to praise God all the more. Imagine this, we humans have the assignment to care for God’s earth, to manage the landscape and waters and air even. In the United States we manage the landscape really well I think, we keep track of the flow of the rivers and how the rainfall drains into the rivers, we manage the fish in the rivers and even the oceans, we have population counts of different population of most of the species and we manage the forests and we manage the plants and the food crops of course. Many years ago the world population was tiny, today, 7 billion people populate the planet and we have always had enough food. Today if there are hungry people in the world it is not because there is not enough food produced but only because the food is too expensive for some people because of income disparity and distribution problems created by wars. Humans have always managed to grow enough food no matter what the world’s population. Not only that we human beings can control the elephants and even whales that are physically so much bigger and stronger. On the other end of the scale we can control the bacteria populations, the tiniest creatures that are sometimes good for us and sometimes very bad for us. We human beings have this incredible ability to manage God’s creation. And who are we again. Today we know that at the genetic level our DNA is 96% identical to that of a chimpanzee. Yet Psalm 8 verse 6 is very clear, we are able to do these things because God who created all these incredible creatures great and small has put them under our dominion and given us the responsibility of naming and caring for his creation. And for such a great honor we owe God tremendous praise.

Now you will say, yes, human being control a lot of things. But we don’t exactly do a great job of it all the time. Actually, we make quite a big mess. Look at the pollution of the planet that causes so much of the population to be deprived of clean drinking water. What about the fact that we are living through a time of the greatest species extinction in a long time, forget exotic creatures, even creatures like frogs and elephants and tigers which we thought would be always around are going to disappear from the planet very soon. Our polar ice caps are melting causing many islands to get submerged and our coral reefs have been undergoing mass bleaching and dying off at frightening rates every year for the last 4 or 5 years. Average temperatures and rising at such alarming rates that climate all over the world is changing dramatically causing most distress to poorer nations and people all over the world. You may ask, how to we praise God for giving human beings dominion over the earth when we have been making such a big mess of things. Well, God is not happy when we make a mess, but the amazing thing is that God is not hindered by the messes we make. And even through our messes God will continue to work his incredible plan for the world. In fact God’s ultimate solution for the messes we have made is to bring His Son Jesus Christ into the world as a human being like you and me and put all things under His feet. Here again Psalm 8 verse 6 is also functioning as a Messianic prophesy. God has put all things under the control of human beings by putting all things he has made under the feet of his son Jesus Christ so that we can then reap the benefits of his rule. So think about this. Psalm 8 is sayings, when you praise God, try and picture who He is, then your praise will flow naturally from you lips. Think of the magnificence of his creation, then you will surely me moved to praise. Think of God’s incredible power over evil forces. That should cause joy and praise to erupt within you.

Think of the humble human beings being given such an exalted status in God’s universe. Surely that has to cause you to praise God, Mary the mother of Jesus did even. And think of the fact that God has sent Jesus Christ to overcome the messes we have made with our own lives and with all of creation even. God not only made an incredible universe, he gave us an incredible position within it and then he also puts in place an incredible clean up plan through his son Jesus Christ so that the end result of the universe will be even better that the universe in the beginning. Aren’t you amazed at how awesome God is? Can you stop praising God when you think about all this?

There was one more thing that we need to address. Remember when we began I told you that the Psalmist is speaking with such authority about such big things, not just things on earth but things in heaven as well. And I asked you the question, so how does he know? Well, as you work through the Psalm you see that the Psalmist refers to human beings in the third person. In other words, when try and figure out whose’s words these are you suddenly realize that this Psalm is not written from a human point of view. This Psalm is written completely from the point of view of a divine being. In other words, this Psalm is really special because while everything in the Bible is written by divine inspiration, this Psalm is written by divine inspiriation from the point of view of a divine being to help human beings see things we would not be able to see other wise and therefore to enhance our capacity to praise God. In other worlds, through this Psalm God has given us a capacity to praise Him, that transcends all our earthly limitations. And that is one more reason to praise God.

You and I have been given this tremendous ability and capacity to praise God. If you and I like babes allow his Holy spirit to work in our lives, we can do nothing but praise our Lord. What an honor! And when we praise God, the enemy freezes in His tracks. So let us praise and pray without ceasing my friends. Let us pray.