

June Teaching Theme: Holiday Season (Pentecost, Trinity, Father's Day, Juneteenth)

讲员 Speaker: Elder Yin / Pastor William R. Horne

题目 Topic: Trinity Sunday

经文 Scripture: Psalm 8

Monthly Theme: The month of June is full of special days on the church calendar and special days on the Western Calendar in the United States. So, this month we will not focus on an over-arching theme, but we will deal with topics pertaining to each unique Sunday. This past Sunday was Trinity Sunday on the Western Church calendar; thus, we looked at a text from the lectionary for the day, Psalm 8, which speaks to the majesty of Creator-God and the vocation of humanity in the purposes of God.

六月 June

June 5th - 五旬節的盛宴 The Feast of Pentecost (利未記 Leviticus 23:15-21) (五旬節 Pentecost)

June 12th – 詩篇第八章 Psalm 8 (聖三一主日 Trinity Sunday)

June 19th – 恩慈的天父 The Gracious Father (路加福音 Luke 15:11-32) (父親節與六月節 Father's Day/Juneteenth)

June 26th - 神悅納人的禧年 The Year of the Lord's Favor (以賽亞書 Isaiah 61:1-11, 路加福音 Luke 4:14-21)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#) (Elder Yin)

[Sermon Video](#) (Pastor Will)

[Sermon Slides](#) (Pastor Will)

Discussion Questions (Pastor William R. Horne)

- (1) Read Psalm 8 together. What observations do you make, and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) According to Psalm 8, who is God?
- (3) According to the Psalm, what is humanity? What Biblical story does this Psalm bring to mind? How does this Psalm help us understand what it means to be human?
- (4) Many New Testament and Early Church writers connected Psalm 8 with Jesus as the ultimate human one. What we translate in 8:4 as “human beings” is literally “son of man,” which carries dual meaning - simply “humans” or the theologically rich idea of the “Son of Man.” Watch the [Son of Man](#) video. How does this title help us understand who Jesus is?
- (5) Read Matthew 21:1-17. How does Jesus' use of Psalm 8 help us understand it?

Important Notes (Pastor William R. Horne):

Notes on Q1: Psalm 8, in both the Psalm itself and its larger literary context, reveals the mystery of being human in the purpose of an Almighty God. The wonder of an all-powerful, majestic, Creator God - who chooses to rule the world through babbling babies - creatures created from the dirt - reminiscent of Genesis 1 and 2.

Now, often we approach the Psalms as if it is a random collection of poems that someone just gathered together in no particular order. However, these 150 poems were collected and arranged with purpose. So, we can receive a message in each Psalm individually, but we can gain a bigger perspective if we read them in light of how they are purposely organized in the five books of the Psalms. Here in Psalm 8, we find ourselves amid Book 1, which itself can be divided into 5 parts. We first have the introduction found in Psalms 1 & 2. Psalm 1 gives us an image of a new “Joshua,” who meditates on the Torah day and night. This figure then is transformed into an eternal tree of life that the righteous will joyously partake in, on the day of final justice - when the Messiah comes to make all things right. Then Psalm 2 is a portrait of the hoped-for Messiah-king from David’s line, a key theme through much of the Hebrew Scriptures. He will bring God’s rule & reign over the Babylon-like nations and rescue the poor and afflicted. After these two crucial introduction Psalms, we have four sections of collected poetry in Book 1 - the first section is Psalm 3 -14, in which find our Psalm for today, Psalm 8, right in the middle.

Before Psalm 8, you have Psalms 3-7, which is made up of 5 poems about David being on the run from the violent threat of his enemies during the days of King Saul and later in the days of his wayward son, Absalom, who, if you recall, started a rebellion against David and sets himself up as king. These 5 poems are written from a place of distress, fear, and anger, calling out to God and asking him to be a protector of the righteous and bring justice against the wicked, his enemies. As he is writing these poems, David is powerless and weak, not knowing if he will live or die. On the other side of our Psalm is 5 more poems, Psalms 9-14, 6 poems in our English Bibles, but technically Psalm 9-10 is one poem. David also writes these 5 poems, but unlike the first 5 that are about his story, these poems are about a group called the “poor and afflicted ones,” of which David includes himself. The “poor and afflicted ones” in the face of oppression under the evil of the world empires, trust in God to be their deliverer. Both David and the “poor and afflicted ones” are under threat and cry out to God to bring them salvation from their enemies and exalt them over their adversaries. Both groups are powerless and weak, and yet they are who God has chosen, the ones God delivers.

It is in the middle of these laments of David and the “poor and afflicted ones” that we find Psalm 8. In Psalm 8, God confronts his enemies with the words of children - the babbling of babies. God elevates the small and insignificant to rule the cosmos, the world. And when we grapple with this reality, we can know what it means to be human in the purposes of an Almighty God - a God who chooses the poor, weak, and powerless.

Notes on Q2: Psalm 8:1 “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.”

In some English translations, it sounds like you have the same title repeated twice “LORD, our Lord.” But if you recall, the Hebrew behind the all capital LORD in our English Bibles is the Holy, Mysterious name of God - which traditionally cannot be pronounced - Y-H-W-H - and may be translated as something like “I am who I am” or “I will be whom I will be.” The Great I AM is the one who ultimately is, the one from who all Creation finds its source. And this God - is our Adoni - Lord, Master, Sovereign, the rightful King over all the earth. This God is not simply a local deity but is Sovereign, ruler of the whole world. His name and reputation go before him - revealing him as majestic, the most beautiful, the most excellent. The True King elevated above all.

And if we slow down enough to see and truly take in the world around us - we will see what the Psalmist sees as he views the Great I AM's royal power clearly manifest in the beauty of the physical world around him. The land, the sky, the waters, and all the creatures therein. The Psalmist's language distinguishes between the Creator and the creation, yet marvels that the beauty of one is discernible in the other - that in creation, we can see the Creator. The Great I AM, Adoni, Elohim is the Majestic, Creator-King.

And this Majestic Creator-King has chosen to rule the world through babbling babies. Psalm 8:2 "Through the praise of infants and nursing babies you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." God's enemies - those working against God's creative work, those dark forces trying to undo God's good creation - are silenced through the praise of children, infants, and nursing babies. What does this riddle-like verse mean? Enemies are silenced through the praise of babies?

If we look at the way the Hebrew word we translated as "nursing babies" here is used in other parts of the Hebrew Bible, we find that it multiple times refers to:

- Helpless victims of war (1 Samuel 15:3; 22:19; 2 Kings 8:12; Hosea 14:1; Lamentations 2:11; 4:4)
- Used Once in Isaiah 11:8, to refer to the vulnerable one in relation to the dangerous viper snake.
- And it is used in Isaiah 53:2, to describe the Suffering Servant of God.

Thus, it appears that "infants and babies" are metaphorical references to the powerless and helpless, who are used by God to carry out his purposes, establishing places of refuge in a world under attack by dark forces. God loves to choose the weak to accomplish his purpose. A clear theme throughout the Biblical story. And this idea of "infants and babies" referring to the poor, powerless, and weak fits well within the larger section of poems that paint the "poor and afflicted ones" crying out to God for deliverance.

Notes on Q3: Psalm 8:3-4 "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?" In light of this Majestic, All-Powerful, Creator-God and his vast, wondrous creation, humanity is rather small and insignificant. This Creator-God has set the very moon and stars in their place - what is humanity that this God thinks about them, human beings that the Triune God cares for them? And then, we read verses 5-6. Psalm 8:5-6 "You have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:"

In light of this Great God and the wonders of Creation, humanity seems insignificant, small, powerless, and weak - YET Creator-God makes them "a little lower than God." This is the beautiful mystery - creatures created from dirt, YET being made in the "image of God," crowned with glory and honor. God loves to choose the weak. Here in the Psalm, translators are confronted with a choice, which might make it confusing depending on which translation you are reading. Many translations, including the NIV, say, "You have made them a little lower than the angels," which, if I am not mistaken, is also closer to how the Chinese Simplified Bible translates it. Or other translations say, "A little lower than the heavenly beings." And places like the NRSV and NLT use my preferred translation, "A little lower than God." And any good Bible probably has a footnote with this verse telling you the other translation option to the one they chose. The

differences in translation here come from the beautiful, complex Hebrew word that many of you, I am sure, know - *Elohim*.

Elohim is a word that can be translated differently depending on the context. It is a plural word that can be translated as gods, or in a few cases, “divine beings” like angels, but most often in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is what is considered a “royal plural”; thus, we translate it as God, in reference to the One True God. And some believe that in some mysterious way, this *Elohim* then alludes to the Trinity - 3 in 1 - and on Trinity Sunday, I am willing to lean into that potential mystery in the word *Elohim*. A plural word that refers to a singular being. But, the point is some translators find it audacious or bold to say humans are just a little lower than God. Still, others, including myself, believe that is actually the type of bold statement the Psalmist is making here - that God has crowned humanity as “a little lower than God” - the “image of God.” If you recall back in Genesis 1 and 2, we find the primary role of God’s image-bearers is to “rule” creation on God’s behalf. God is the one true King over all creation, defining what is good and what is evil. And at the peak of his creative work, he made the dirt creatures - the humans - calling them “made in the Image of God,” giving them authority to rule and cultivate his creation through their work. The task of “ruling” in other ancient literature was only for the elite ruling class, but here in the Hebrew creation account - the task of “ruling” is given to all of humanity. God loves to choose the weak. Seemingly insignificant dirt creatures are YET a little lower than God, by God’s decrees - the Divine Image bearers.

And this Good Creator-King uses these insignificant creatures to accomplish his great purposes in creation. So we see in Psalm 8 two purposes for which God uses the humans - (1) to defeat his enemies - the hostile forces against his good creation - through their praise. And (2) to steward all of untamed creation “put under their feet.” We as humanity - God’s image-bearers - are to work against the evil forces wreaking havoc on God’s good creation and care for and cultivate the creation entrusted to us. The task of “ruling” creation is to care and cultivate, never to exploit or abuse. And when we are rightly submitted to the Ultimate God - the Majestic Great I AM - this reality is possible. The vocation of humans is to stand at the intersection of heaven and earth. And when this is rightly done, we give all creation a taste of the reality to come, when God’s reign and rule are in full effect. N.T. Wright talks about this human vocation of “Image Bearers” as an angled mirror that reflects God to the creation and the praise of creation back to God.

Notes on Q5: In Matthew 21, we find Jesus in an anti-climatic triumphal entry into Jerusalem as its rightful King - yet he is riding on a donkey. As he and the donkey make the trek towards the city gates, the crowds gather along the road and begin shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” Everyone was stirred when he entered the city, asking, “Who is this?” Many said he is “Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.” As the rightful king, Jesus the Son of Man’s first order of business was to hold a prophet protest against the corruption of the temple. He entered the temple courts and drove out all of the merchants, flipping over their tables and proclaiming the words of the prophet Jeremiah, “ ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of Robbers.’” And then the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and received healing. While the religious leaders watched the event unfold, children began shouting again, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” And they were furious. They asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these

children are saying?” And Jesus responded - “Yes - have you never read Psalm 8:2. “Through the praise of children and infants, you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” Jesus is the true human. And the praise of little children puts to shame those who work against God.