

“God’s World: Our World”

Psalm 8

(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+8)

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“Get rid of anything that isn’t useful, beautiful, or joyful!”

“Who am I?” That question is one that all of us ask of ourselves at certain points in our lives. “What am I called to value most in this world?” Again, this is a familiar question to most humans. The poet who wrote this creation psalm responds to both of these questions.

Psalm 8 is written in a familiar Hebrew poetic style. Verses 1 and 9 are parallel. That is they say the same thing. When we see this construction of a Hebrew poem, we know that the key item of the poem is in the middle. Let’s look at what the poet is emphasizing.

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you made them a little lower than the heavenly beings, and crowned them with glory and honor.” (Vs4&5)
(www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+8:4-5)

Let us look at two parts of these verses to help us better understand who we are and what we can do to make this world a better place. The first part is a word: “mindful.” The second part is a phrase: “made them a little lower than the heavenly beings.”

God is “Mindful” of you!

What could mindfulness be? Instead of doing a definition search for the root word, let me tell you a story. I just returned from an 11 day trip in the Middle East. While I was visiting Greece, Turkey, Israel, and Egypt, my wife Jamie was at home. I was mindful of her all the time I was away. All through the day, I thought of her and I prayed for her. Not an hour went by that I did not think of her. As I said, she was on my mind.

That is the meaning of the word. We are on God’s mind. How God can be mindful of millions of people simultaneously, I do not know. I guess that is why God is God and I am not. What we do know is that God is mindful of each of you. What you do, how you act, and who you are growing to be is important to God. God cares! God is mindful!

“Made them a little lower than the heavenly beings.”

When God is mindful of us, then God thinks of who we are and who we can grow to be. God sees us as we are. God knows our potential. God wants us to be living a life that is heaven filled while we are still walking on earth. God knows that we are created of the dust of earth, but in the image of God. When God is mindful of us, I think God at least looks for how we are growing and stretching toward paradise in the values we choose to accept and live by. Our core values give direction to our life. Our core values identify what we find important and therefore what we do with our time. Our core, lifetime values are important because the values we choose to live by determine whether our lives are pointing toward heaven or in the other direction. You must choose your values! Not to choose is to choose!

There is a young woman who clearly points out the necessity and importance of your value choice. See if you can follow her as she challenges your value choices.

U-Tube Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=WUQYJ77qa50

Chilson’s Core Values

As a church we have chosen to identify and grow into a set of core values that puts us on the upward track. We are mindful that **Psalm 8** is true. We really do live in the middle of heaven and earth. There really are forces that seek to pull us down and forces that invite us to move up. We know that our core values determine how we will live in the midst of the tension. Our core values will determine what is useful, what is beautiful, and what is joyful!

Chilson’s core values are: We are created to live abundantly; to learn continuously; to love unconditionally, and to leave a legacy of hope. Let’s look at each of these four legs that hold up the footstool that lifts us toward heaven.

To live abundantly!

Jesus told us that he came from God for a purpose. One key purpose he expressed in **John 10:10** . (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+10:10) ***“I have come that you might have abundant life.”*** Unfortunately, when we hear that phrase we automatically think of having many things. Abundant life for us who live in America is defined by what we possess. That is not what Jesus meant. I do not think Jesus cares about the latest technological toy. Abundant life has to do with the inner spirit. Paul’s encouragement in **Philippians 4** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=philippians+4) to rejoice no matter what the circumstances captures the essence of the abundant life. Let me see if I can help us see the abundant life more clearly this morning.

We are all afraid of cancer. People react to that word in many different ways. We hate to hear it used in the same breath with the name of a friend. We shutter to think of the word being used in connection with ourselves. When the word is spoken we focus upon the material, physical aspect of the disease. We think of it as some overwhelming enemy. At that point we are caught in the American trap of the importance of the physical. Let me invite you to shift your thinking and see cancer in a different way. Let me move you more toward what Jesus is talking about when he says to live the abundant life.

Cancer is so limited...

It cannot cripple love,
It cannot shatter hope,
It cannot corrode faith,
It cannot eat away peace,
It cannot destroy confidence,
It cannot kill friendship,
It cannot shut out memories,
It cannot silence courage,
It cannot invade the soul,
It cannot reduce eternal life,
It cannot quench the spirit,
It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection.

God is greater than any physical disease. God is mindful of you and will give you strength and power to live abundantly no matter what your physical condition. Living abundantly with God is living with God’s gift of inner strength and joy no matter what the outward circumstance might be.

To learn continuously!

A Second aspect of living with an upward focus in God’s created order is to choose to learn continuously. One of the key elements of being a human, living above the animal world, is our ability to reflect upon our condition and learn from it. We can think! We can question! We can wonder! We can imagine! God gives us the gift of learning.

One of the reasons we have such a messed up planet is God’s great grace that allowed us the choice to learn when we were created. God is not interested in us being unthinking robots. God loves for us to learn continuously.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his young student Timothy these words; ***“Study to show yourself to God as one approved...”*** (**II Timothy 2:15**) (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ii+timothy+2:15) Paul is encouraging Timothy to learn continuously.

Let me be very specific. God wants us to ask questions! Asking questions is not stupid. That’s a lousy word anyway. Speaking of stupid: A recent “Bizarro” cartoon showed a couple walking down a street. She had on a T-shirt that said, “I’m with Stupid,” and there was an arrow pointing toward the man. The man was wearing a T-shirt which said: “Stupid: in this case a term of endearment. I scored 1468 on my SAT. I have a Ph.D. in rocket science. And I speak five languages. A bit insecure but not stupid.” (Thanks to Rick Brand, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Henderson, North Carolina)

Are you familiar with the many best selling books that use the word “Dummies” in their title? These books sell for \$20.00 each. They are written to appeal to the person who is asking a question and needs to know the simple answer. I am a dummy about many things. I want to know about so much. Knowledge begins with recognizing you do not know, and being willing to ask a question!

God is mindful of you and will support, encourage, and provide all sorts of resources for you on your journey of continual learning. This is not a boring world. There is more to learn than we can learn in this lifetime. Make a decision today that you will learn something new every day of your life. I am looking forward to continuing to learn. God's world is so amazing, that I can keep learning and learning and learning without stopping until I am given the gift of graduating to a new level of learning with God. We can grow with God because we learn from God!

To love unconditionally!

God is mindful of how we love. Jesus continually told us to love each other. In fact, Jesus' summary of Holy Scripture is found in **Matthew 22:37-39** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+22:37-39). ***“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself.”*** If we want to live a Christ-like life, then we will learn to let God's unconditional love flow through us.

MANUEL GARCIA © 1986 David Roth

based on a true story, with thanks to William Janz of the Milwaukie Sentinel for sending me his series of articles

Manuel Garcia, a proud youthful father
Was known on his block as a hard working man
With a wife and a family, a job and a future
He'd everything going according to plan

One day Manuel Garcia, complaining of stomach pains
Went to the clinic to find out the cause
His body was found to have cancerous tissue
Ignoring the order of natural laws

So Manuel Garcia of Milwaukee County
Checked into the medical complex in town
Suddenly seeing his thirty-nine years
Like the sand in an hourglass plummeting down

“What are my choices,” cried Manuel Garcia
“You've basically two,” was the doctor's decree
“Your cancer untreated will quickly be fatal
But treatment is painful with no guarantees...”

And so it began, Manuel's personal odyssey
Long sleepless nights in a chemical daze
With echoes of footsteps down long lonely corridors
Tolling his minutes and hours away

With the knowledge that something inside
was consuming him
Manuel Garcia was filled with despair
He'd already lost forty pounds to the cancer
And now to the drugs he was losing his hair

After nine weeks in treatment the doctor came calling
Said “Manuel, we've done about all we can do
Your cancer could go either way at this juncture
It's out of our hands and it's now up to you...”

He looked in the mirror, a sad frightened stranger
So pale, so wrinkled, so lonely, so scared
Diseased, isolated, and feeling unlovable
One-hundred-twenty-six pounds and no hair

He dreamed of his Carmen at sixty without him
His four little children not having their Dad
Of Thursday night card games at Julio's
And everything else he'd not done
That he wished that he had

Awakened from sleep on the day of his discharge
By shuffling feet going all around his bed
Manuel opened his eyes
and thought he was still dreaming
His wife, and four friends with no hair on their heads

He blinked and he looked again, not quite believing
The four shiny heads all lined up side by side
And still to that point not a word had been spoken
But soon they were laughing so hard that they cried

And the hospital hallways were ringing with voices
"Patron, we did this for you," said his friends
And they wheeled him out to the car
they had borrowed
"Amigo, estamos contigo ves..."

So Manuel Garcia returned to his neighborhood
Dropped off in front of his two-bedroom flat
The block seemed unusually deserted for Sunday
He drew a deep breath and adjusted his hat

But before he could enter the front door flew open
Manuel was surrounded with faces he knew
Fifty-odd loved ones and friends of the family
With clean-shaven heads and the words "we love you"

And so Manuel Garcia, a person with cancer
A father, a husband, a neighbor, a friend
With a lump in his throat said
"I'm not one for speeches
But here I have something that needs to be said

I felt so alone with my baldness and cancer
Now you stand beside me, thank Heaven above
For giving me strength that I need may God Bless You
And long may we live with the meaning of love

For giving me strength that I need may God Bless You
And long may we live with the meaning of love"

<http://www.davidrothmusic.com/lyricsmanuelgarcia.html>

To leave a legacy of hope!

To be aware of the mindfulness of God in our lives means that we want to respond to God. In **Romans 5: 2-4a** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=romans+5:2-4a) way of responding through actually living is given. *"We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character; and character, hope."*

All of us want to leave something of good behind us on this planet. None of us will get out of this life without dealing with the pain, tragedy, and turmoil of the tribulation of knowing Christ and living on a fallen planet. Our challenge is to let the Risen Christ teach us while we go through the tough times so that we grow in our faith, grow in our joy, and grow in God's peace. As we grow with God, God grows us up to be the kind of people that naturally share hope with others. When we are connected with the Risen Christ, we naturally give forth light. And, with Christ's help, we leave people with hope.

Hope in Christ is the best gift you can give your family and your friends. You might think leaving a pile of money would be a great gift, but it isn't. You might think that leaving a large stock portfolio might be a great legacy, but it isn't. You might think that leaving a lot of paid for real estate would be a great legacy, but it isn't. The eternal gift that keeps on giving for all time is hope in Christ. To leave a legacy of hope in the Risen Christ is to assure that you and your family and friends will be together again in heaven.

Core values determine your life choices and your life direction!

Let us accept the challenge of God to live in such Christ-like choices determine our life focus! Let us reject this culture of cynicism, despair, and depression. This world will not have the last word over our lives. We are Easter people. We live with Easter values. We are connected to a living Lord who is our teacher, guide, redeemer, and friend. With the Risen Christ's help we can:

“Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful, or joyful!”

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