

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Aug 12, 2018

What Is Our Glory? – Hope/Uncertainty (Psalm 8)



**Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
(Ps 8:5)**

A lesson from the psalm

What are you worth? – did your mind go to your material wealth when I asked that question? – the lesson from this psalm for this morning is different – it sets our material worth in a new context – our worth is, first and foremost, the gift of responsibility – we are created and cared for in order to work with God to bless that God's creation – simple to say – impossible to do perfectly – it's really a matter of growing humbly into the glory that is our birthright from God – that glory is the honour of being custodians of the well-being of this creation

Provocative points to ponder

- The place of the psalm – after an introduction to the book in the first two psalms, then five psalms of complaint/lament – the whole book begins with a whine – why are things so bad? – why are my enemies so powerful? – why don't you make things better? – important to look at these matters to make sense of the way this collection of songs so influential in the formation and sustaining of our faith was finally compiled over at least five centuries, as Rick pointed out a few weeks ago – begins by acknowledging human suffering as a fact of life – and by acknowledging that God is present in the midst of it, a sympathetic listener to our laments
- Ps 8 is the first real psalm of praise to God – what form does that praise take? – appreciation for the power and providence of God AND gratitude for the special responsibilities that God has given to human beings in caring for God's creation – this psalmist has no hesitation in acknowledging the dignity and worth of humans in the sight of God – would that generations of Christian commentators had payed more careful attention to this fundamental affirmation of God's Word in the Scriptures! – we have become accustomed to putting people down, others and ourselves, for all their faults and failures – that is a complex set of dynamics in our day-to-day lives, individually and collectively, but it lies at the root of many of the things we complain about – it clouds any hope that might be trying to break into our lives and leaves us filled with uncertainties - our laments are rooted in our rebellion against God's calling – our refusal to live out our dignity and worth in ways that serve God's Commonwealth

Finding this in God's living Word, Jesus Christ

- The greatest witness that this God of Israel made to the dignity and worth of human beings was to take their flesh and dwell among them in Jesus of Nazareth – ponder that fact for a moment – it's not humans becoming God – it's God becoming human to show us how to exercise the 'dominion' or 'mastery' over the creation that he had in mind for us from the very beginning – exercise it in love, through justice, with kindness, all the while enjoying a humble relationship with that God in blessing creation – this psalm does a wonderful job of placing our worth in its proper context – it arises from our humble and teachable companionship with the Creator of all that is

Your Notes

Prayers for Help – in learning our true worth in the eyes of God – in living with others in ways that convey to them their dignity as beloved friends of God – in dealing lovingly with ourselves as we realize more deeply the web of rebellions that ensnare us in attitudes and behaviours that make us enemies of your Commonwealth (silence to consider this)

Prayers of Thanks – for all those through whom your energy is working in this world, whether they know it or not – for first responders to destruction, disaster, and distress – for care givers who walk with people through the healing of their souls – for the musicians in our midst who tune into your energy so creatively and compassionately – for the community here at Brentwood and the many profound ways it nourishes our souls to flourish (silence to consider this)

Prayers of Wow – at the grandeur of your creation – at the loving, persuasive, gentle way you exercise your majesty among us – at the ways the energy of your glory nourishes our stewardship of your creation (silence to consider this)

The framework and flow of thanks, help, and awe is taken from Anne Lamott's wonderful little book on prayer, Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).