

The Psalms (Part 3) – Name Above All Names

Josh Patterson – June 2, 2019

Good morning, church. My name is Josh Patterson. I'm one of the pastors on staff here. I'm honored to be here with you and to dive into Psalm 8. As you're turning there, let me reintroduce some things about me briefly. The only things you really need to know about me is I'm married to Natalie and we have four kids. We named all of our kids not the same name but names that start with the same letter, the letter *L*: Lily, Luke, Liv, and Lucy.

When we were thinking through what the first name was going to be for Lily... Natalie was a teacher, so there was a whole host of names that were off the list because they reminded her of someone. I can remember working through the list of names, and when we got to Lily we were both like, "Man, we love that name," but we didn't think at that point, "All of their names are going to start with the letter *L*." It just kind of happened that way.

When Luke came along, Natalie's sister said, "Have you thought about the name Luke?" We thought, "We love the name Luke," so we went with the name Luke. Then on our third, we decided to be surprised, not with the name but with the sex of the child. We had that moment where we had a boy and we had a girl, so we had all the stuff, so let's be surprised. It was awesome if you're into that, if you're into fun and surprises. If you're not, then just find out.

So we had two names at this point. We had the name Liv, which continued on the *L* theme, and the name William if we had a boy. Well, we had a girl, so it was Liv. Then at that point, when we were pregnant the fourth time, we knew we couldn't not choose an *L* name. We couldn't leave Lucy out of that, so we went with Lucy. Here's the thing about their names. It's not just the sound of the names that meant something to us; it's the actual significance or the meaning behind the names. We put a lot of thought into that.

Lily means purity, beauty, innocence; *Luke* means the one who bears or brings light; *Liv* means life; and *Lucy* means light. My guess is for your kids you thought a lot about the names you would give

them, that there's some significance, weight, meaning, hope, prayer behind those names. You did not put your hand in a hat and just draw out a name and think, "We'll go with this." If you did *not* put a lot of thought behind what you named your kids, just lie to them and tell them you did. I think that's important.

There are names, not just our kids' names... Certain names carry certain cultural weight and cultural meaning, for good and for ill. For instance, in no particular order, let me give you some names of people who have shaped history. Here are some names: Aristotle, Galileo, Plato, Socrates, Lincoln, Gandhi, King, Churchill, Hitler, Stalin, Washington, Moses, Caesar, Marx, Gutenberg, Edison, Beethoven, Mandela, Einstein.

Or maybe more from the mainstream, pop culture, celebrity world...Elvis, Sinatra, Cher, Sting, Prince, Madonna, Usher, Beyoncé, Rihanna, Adele, Zendaya. All of those names carry some semblance, aspect, of weight and meaning, yet there is a name that is beyond all names. There is a greater name. There is a name that is incomparable, indescribable, a name that is above all names.

Where we're going to be this morning in Psalm 8, David, the author of this psalm, is going to answer this question for us: *Why is God's name so majestic in all the earth?* Why is this name the name above all names? Why is there no rival, no equal to this name? I'll just let you know the answer now. Here's my point. Why is God's name so majestic in all the earth? It's because God is the compassionate Creator and God compassionately recreates.

Psalm 8 is going to point us to this reality: God compassionately creates and recreates. As you're turning to Psalm 8, here are a few things I want you to keep in mind, because we're simply not going to have time to let these things sit. I wish we could, in a sense, let this psalm kind of decant for a while, let it breathe and come into its fullness, but given our time constraints for the morning, we're going to have to walk through some things. I hope you would go back and let these truths sit and work your way through Psalm 8 again this week.

Here are a few things to keep in mind. The psalm begins and ends the same way. This is called an *inclusion*. What that means is the beginning of the psalm and the end of the psalm point to everything in the middle of the psalm. I want you to see that God works through the weak things of the world to display his power. You're going to see that in verse 2 and in verse 4.

I want you to see the rhythm of the psalm, or the structure of the psalm. It has this chiasmic rhythm to it, where it kind of goes like this: wonder, glory, weakness, glory, weakness, wonder. Or to put the cookies even lower: wow, big, small, big, small, wow. That's what Psalm 8 is doing. It doesn't call us to any specific action other than worship, astonishment, and awe. The psalm just leaves us there, mouth open, staring up, and saying what David says at the beginning and the end: **"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"**

What I also want you to see is that this psalm is going to point out that God is both transcendent and immanent, far and near, infinite and intricate, and that this God is mindful of you and cares for you. I would say it like this: *even you. You.* Then, finally, humanity is crowned with glory and responsibility. So, let's read Psalm 8 together, keeping those things in mind. The inscription reads: "To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David." Psalm 8:

"O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

Why is God's name majestic in all the earth? David begins in verse 1 talking about God's name, that there's something unique about God's name. He starts, **"O LORD, our Lord..."** If I could translate it like this, it translates, "O Yahweh, our Adonai." "O God, our Master." David starts the psalm using first the covenantal name of God. "O Yahweh, this is your name. You have established relationship with us, and our position to you, Yahweh, is you are our Lord, our Adonai, our Master." **"O LORD, our Lord..."** There's something about his name.

Then David says that it's majestic. It's stately. It's kingly. It's glorious. It's above all. **"...how majestic is your name in all the earth!"** Other places where it talks about God's majestic name... Exodus 15:6, his royal attribute, highlighting victories. We see it in 1 Samuel 4:8 and Psalm 76,

displaying his might and judgment. In Isaiah 42, we see his majesty through his law. Then we see his rule over creation here in Psalm 8 and also in Psalm 93. His name is majestic.

Where in all the earth...? There is no place near or far, high or low, where his name does not rule and reign supreme. Every tongue, every tribe, every nation... His name is *the* great name in all the earth. Then he goes on to contrast the earth at the end of verse 1. "**You have set your glory above the heavens.**" David just starts with wonder, with wow, with astonishment, with being taken aback by this good, gracious, loving God. God creates compassionately.

He moves on from there, and it kind of catches me a little bit off guard as we begin to see why God's name is so majestic. Verses 1 and 9 describe the wonder and wow of God's name, and then verses 2-8 describe why his name is majestic. In verse 2, David says, "**Out of the mouth of babies and infants...**" It feels to me like he goes in a direction I wasn't necessarily anticipating. So, what is David highlighting here in verse 2 and later in verse 4? He's highlighting weakness, and he's highlighting weakness up against and in contrast to his power.

Notice what's happening in verse 2. God is saying, "I defeat the enemies of the world, the foes of this world, not with my might and strength and my overwhelming presence, but I use the weakest and the most vulnerable, because that's how transcendent and powerful I am. Out of the mouth of babbling babies I bring down the strongholds of this world." There is none like him.

Then in verse 3 it says David looked. Where did David look? He looks up into the heavens, to the moon and the stars. David in his looking takes a step back. I want us to get how important this is, how important perspective is for you and me to have. You and I get so caught up in the routinized realities of our days. Just day after day, the pressures and the struggles and the worries and the temptations. They're here, they're in front of us, and there's this microscopic reality to what we do.

How important is it just to take that step back and get a sense of what all of this is? Parents, you know this. Does your day, if you have little ones (or maybe big ones) go something like this? "No. No. No. Stop. Please, stop. Stop. Stop. No. No. I'm tired. I'm exhausted. Stop. Clean it up. Pick it up. Put it up. Put it away. No, take that out. Go to bed. Brush your teeth. Another cup of water? Again? Are you serious? Please just go to sleep. Anything. Now, please. I'm exhausted."

Then you have time with your spouse, about 8 to 12 minutes before you're asleep, and you think, "I don't know how to do this again tomorrow." And tomorrow, guess what you do. You do that again.

What if you step back and gain that perspective? David looked. You step back, and then you see, Mom, Dad... "Yeah, it's challenging when it's microscopic, but let me get a little bit of a telescopic view here. I need to be reminded that they are a blessing, a gift from the Lord. I need to be reminded that this is grace to me."

I step into the microscopic realities of my world through a telescopic reprieve. It's not just with children. Maybe it's with work. Day in and day out, the pressures and the struggles, the bills to pay, the mounting pressures of work...whatever it may be, to step back. David steps back and looks to the heavens, and he sees the moon and the stars. Have you looked? Have you stepped back, church? When was the last time you took in a sunset? Like, took it in, or maybe were met with the breaking of the dawn.

Did you tremble on Wednesday when the storms rolled through here and realized how small you were? Have you stood under the canopy of a forest and just looked up and thought, "This is magnificent. This is glorious. This is beautiful"? And it doesn't terminate there. It gets beyond. It goes higher. It goes more. This is what David is doing. He's gathering perspective as he looks up and he sees.

Notice what he sees and how he describes it in verse 3. "I look at the moon and the stars and the heavens, and these things are but the work of your fingers. This is nothing for you. This is no sweat for you. The expanse of the heavens you just knit together with your fingers." So, where does this leave David, and where does this leave us? With the question he asks in verse 4...*What is man?* "Who am I? Why me?"

"...what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?" The words here *man* and *son of man*... *Man* means the fragility of man, or the feebleness of man. *Son of man* is an idiom talking about the commonality of humanity, that we are all feeble and weak and frail. Have you felt this? When was the last time you felt weak, especially in a time of contrast when you thought you were strong?

I didn't even tell my wife this, but a couple of weeks ago I was tying my shoes... My shoes! I've done this a lot in my life. I tied the shoes and stood up and was like, "Oh god!" Does that ever happen to you, just a little tweak in your back? It's coming for some of you where it hasn't happened. In this moment I was like, "Why is this happening?" I've spent hundreds of dollars on pillows just to find

one that when I wake up in the morning my neck doesn't hurt. Anybody else like that, where you just feel the feebleness of your reality?

These are lighthearted, easy examples, but what about those moments when you thought you were strong until you got the diagnosis? What about the moments when you thought you were strong until life began to crumble? You felt weak. You felt small. David in this moment, as he looks, realizes, "Who am I?" I want you to catch, I want you to see, and I want you to feel what's happening here, because when he asks the question, "Who am I?" God's response is not "That's right! Who *are* you?" It's "Who am I that you are mindful of me and that you care for me?"

Another translation of *mindful* is the idea that "You have visited me." The verb here for *care* doesn't mean "I cared back then," but it has this continual aspect of "I cared and I care and I will care for you." God has demonstrated his care for you. So, why is his name so majestic in all the earth? Because he, God, compassionately creates. He didn't just spin this thing up and let it go, like a deist would think. He spun this thing up, rolled up his sleeves, and got involved and has stayed. He is with *you!* Are you tempted to believe otherwise, like I am?

Have you felt that in your guts when you've asked the question, "Do you hear me, God? I've asked this time and time and time again. Are you listening? Do you care? Do you even know what it's like down here in this situation where I find myself in the pressures and the weight and the suffering? Are you there?" David says he compassionately is mindful of you and is with you, that he has created you, he sees you, and he loves you.

How good of a word is that? Just to be reminded no matter what I am tempted to believe otherwise. I know this word to be true, and God's Word is saying to me, "Now I see you. I care about you. I'm mindful of you." God's compassion in his creation doesn't just stop at the fact... As if that's not enough that he created and then is mindful and caring, his compassion continues. In verses 6-8, we see that God has given us a representative responsibility.

Verses 6-8 hearken back to Genesis 1, to the creation mandate of Genesis 1, where God not only created you and me, humanity, but then gave us something to do. He created us, gave us an identity as an image bearer, but then endowed us with purpose and meaning. "Go. Be. Enjoy. Represent me across this globe." Notice the verses in 6-8. "I've given you dominion over the works of my hands. I put all things under your feet." Then he talks about what those things are.

God has given you a responsibility on this earth. Yes, this God who is other, this God who is transcendent, this God who is holy and righteous and distant and altogether different than you and me is intricately involved and near and has come close. It would have been fine enough had he noticed you, but it's *how* he notices you. He notices you with care, and he says to you, "I have something for you. Represent me. Be my vice-regents and representatives across this globe. Work dominion out. Reign and rule. When people interact with you, they should get a sense of who I am."

I think this is amazing, because God has written me into the story. He's writing the screenplay, and I have a role, yet I feel like an inadequate actor. I feel like my times when I've been called to represent him I've not represented him well. If I think about this God who's being described in Psalm 8, I come nowhere close to him. So then I think about, "I'm supposed to represent *him*? Me?" I go right back up to verse 4. "What is man? Who am I?"

We go back to the question of why God's name is so majestic in all the earth. Because God compassionately creates and recreates. Verses 6-8 show up also in Hebrews, chapter 2. Before I read Hebrews 2, I want to set it up by giving you this quote by Blaise Pascal who was a French philosopher and mathematician. He's describing the paradox of humanity.

He says, "What a figment of the imagination human beings are! What a novelty, what monsters! Chaotic, contradictory, prodigious, judging everything, mindless worm of the earth, storehouse of truth, cesspool of uncertainty and error, glory and [garbage] of the universe. Who will unravel this tangle?" If you and I are to be representatives of God on this earth, who am I to represent him? Who will unravel this tangle? Psalm 8:6-8 shows up in Hebrews 2:6-9. The writer writes this:

"It has been testified somewhere [Psalm 8], 'What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.' Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone."

The writer of Hebrews highlights the failure of humanity to fulfill Psalm 8 but celebrates the one man, the God-man, the last Adam, who fulfills it perfectly; namely, Jesus. Why is God's name so

majestic in all the earth? Because God creates compassionately and recreates all things through Christ. What you and I could not fulfill in Psalm 8 Jesus steps in and fulfills perfectly.

Where he is crowned with glory and honor, as he was made yet for a little while a little lower than the angels, he steps into our place where he became sin, the one who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. What is man? Who am I? Jesus steps in and says, "You are mine. *You*. You are mine." What is happening here in Psalm 8, fulfilled in Hebrews 6, only points to the reality of Colossians 1. Catch this.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."

Why is God's name so majestic in all the earth? Because he compassionately creates and recreates all things through Christ, where we see the transcendence and immanence of God displayed in both his creative power and his salvific power. In the incarnation, we see Jesus stepping into humanity. **"...what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"** He demonstrated his care and his mindfulness of you and me as he visited us, as he tabernacled with us in his incarnation.

This Sunday, on Ascension Sunday, we celebrate the fact that Jesus rose and ascended to the right hand of the Father where he has defeated sin, death, and the Enemy to reign and rule from here to eternity future. The grave is empty, but the throne is not, and he sits on it. *This* one has visited you

with mindfulness and care. *This* one has said, "I see you, and I step in to fulfill what you could not fulfill, to be what you could not be, to do what you could not do."

So, why is his name so majestic in all the earth? Why does Paul in Philippians 2 say, "**Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**"? Church, his name is a good name. Here's what I want to leave us with. I have three quick points, and then I'm done.

1. *Look up.* Take that step back and look up. See. Be reminded of his transcendence, his immanence, his glory, his worth, his might, his strength, his care, his consideration. He goes from infinite to intricate just like *that*. He sees you, he knows you, he loves you, but you and I have to stop. We have to step back to gain the perspective, to soak in the grace, to let the truth decant and become full-bodied in our hearts. Look up.

2. *Live fully.* What I mean by living fully is that life is only found in him, and he has called you and me to a representative responsibility to represent him in the world. The greatest thing I can bring to the world is not what I *do* but the message I have: there is grace available. I needed it. You see, I couldn't live up, measure up.

I wasn't good enough, strong enough, fast enough, tall enough, quick enough, smart enough, rich enough, [fill in the blank], and neither are you, but there is one who *is*, and his name is the name above all names, and he's mindful of you. He cares about you. So look up. Live fully in the grace and the wonder of Jesus.

3. *Worship his name.* Rejoice in Christ. Lift him up. "**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**" David only knew in part what you and I know in full. "O Lord, our Lord, our triune God, O Sovereign Ruler, King of the universe, how majestic is your name in all the earth. May you be praised. May you be lifted up. May you be on high. Not *my* name, not *our* name, but *your* name."

When I think about my kiddos, I love their names, but their names take on greater weight, meaning, significance, and all of the hopes of my prayers when I run their names through the reality of who Jesus is. *Lily* (pure, beauty, and innocence) finds its depth, weight, meaning, truth, purpose only in Jesus, that she would know her purity is found in him, her beauty in him, her significance in him.

Luke, the one who brings light. What light do I hope Luke brings? The light of Christ. *Liv* means life. There is no life outside of him. Sweet girl, know this. *Lucy* means light. He is the Light of the World. There is no name greater than this name. I pray that our church would proclaim, worship, lift up, celebrate, and rejoice in the powerful, salvific, compassionate, gracious name of Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we love you. We bless you. We say that your name is above all names. The name of your Son is the name above all names. What a gift, privilege, honor, and joy it is to know his name, and how humbling it is, God, to know that you, the one who has the name above all names, know our names, that you see us, that you're mindful of us, and that you care for us. So even now, receive our worship. God, you have compassionately created and are recreating all things through the glorious name of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

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