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Sermon Notes

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Humbled and Exalted by the Glory of God

Psalm 8

I. Introduction: The Study of God, the Study of Man

A. Man the Measure of All Things

Ronnie Stevens, one of the great hidden moments in history of American education: President of Harvard University, Charles Eliot's, dedication of Emerson Building of Philosophy at Harvard University... needed a suitable inscription for the façade over the entrance Professor William James suggested

Protagoras (c. 490 -c. 420 B.C.) "**Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, how they are, and of things that are not, how they are not.**"

Eliot at the unveiling shocked everyone by going back over five hundred years earlier than the Greek philosopher... to the words of a Jewish shepherd boy named David...

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him...?”

Truly this question has followed humanity through all of its history

B. 20th Century: Man Exposed at His Best and Worst

1. Technological advances that stagger the mind
2. Moral failures and atrocities that sear the conscience

C. The Doctrine of Man

1. Science: “anthropology” based on Darwin’s theory of evolution
 - a. work of archaeology... digging in some African desert for bits of bone
 - b. greatly affected our worldview on all issues
2. John Calvin: Opening Lines to the *Institutes*

- a. written in 1535 when he was just 27 years old, living in hiding in Basel
- b. one of the greatest statements in the history of theology

“Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”

Thus, this topic is essential... faulty understanding of ourselves is the root of most of the heresies in church history

We cannot know ourselves without knowing God

For this very reason, some of the most intelligent scientists the world has ever seen are but fools, groping in the dark for the distant origins of the human race, and groping every bit as in the dark for solutions to the seemingly infinite ailments that corrupt our experience here on earth: war, disease, poverty, hatred, suffering, famine, racial violence, abortion, etc.

D. Scripture the Source of True Wisdom

Almost **three thousand years ago**, a humble shepherd boy lay on his back tending a meager insignificant flock owned by his father... his brothers were off fighting in a war... David, the most insignificant of Jesse’s eight sons stared up at the intense night sky, strewn with more stars than any man could count... that night, thoughts of the immense majesty of God and of the puny insignificance of man were burned into his mind

Later, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote an astonishingly brief poem, a mere 71 words in the Hebrew

Only when we look into the face of God as He has revealed it can we see ourselves properly

God has revealed His face in two great places... in His physical creation and in His Scripture

Let us look into those twin mirrors to understand properly the answer to the question: “What is man?”

E. Outline

1. David’s Prophetic Meditation
2. Christ’s Perfect Fulfillment
3. Application

II. David’s Prophetic Meditation

- A. The Majesty of God Displayed (vs. 1-2)
- B. The Humility of Man Contemplated (vs. 3-4)
- C. The Honor of Man Established (vs. 5-8)
- D. The Majesty of God Repeated (vs. 9)

A. The Majesty of God Displayed (vs. 1-2)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

1. Covenant faithfulness: “O LORD...” YHWEH... the name God used in the burning bush
2. Personal relationship: “...our Lord”
3. World-wide fame: “How majestic is your name in all the earth”

a question of a ravished lover... not meant to be answered, just meant to reflect wonder

Like the lovers in the Song of Solomon

Song of Songs 1:15-16 How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves. 16 How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming!

Like the worshiper in Psalm 104, thinking about God’s awesome creation...

Psalm 104:24 “How many are your works, O Lord; in wisdom you made them all!”

This is the essence of worship... David, the shepherd boy lays back on the hill, watching the sheep and marveling at the immense, world-wide majesty of God’s glory as revealed in the night-time sky

d. majestic

spoken of jagged mountains Psalm 76:4, of terrifying storms in Psalm 93:4, of lofty forests like cedars of Lebanon in Zechariah 11:2

“Majestic” means that God’s name takes the breath away... it inspires fear and reverence

e. God’s name = God’s reputation, God’s world-wide fame

People all over the world can see how majestic you are, God... you are not some tribal deity; your deeds are far too great simply to be the God of Israel

4. Glory hung out for all to see

You have set your glory above the heavens.

a. two ways to consider :

i) You have displayed your glory IN the heavens

Illus. Middle ages, craftsmen hung out a sign to display their trade... even better, they would put on display a masterpiece or two, clear examples of their skill in their trade

The heavens above are a display of the splendor and glory of their maker

BUT also, Hebrews says clearly God has set His glory ABOVE the heavens

ii) You have set your glory ABOVE the heavens!!

As immense as the heavens are, as glorious and majestic, God's actual personal glory is far greater

Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

Astronomers calculate the size of the universe at between 10 and 20 billion light years across, but their calculations are based on so many complex assumptions, all of which are subject to debate, that no one really knows for sure how big it is. One thing for sure, the scale is so immense that our human minds cannot really comprehend it... we measure distance from here to home in miles, or hours of driving, or plane connections... we have no unit big enough to measure the universe

But according to Isaiah 40:12, God measures the universe with the breadth of his hand! He contains the dust of the earth in a basket!!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

5. Glory declared by the weakest human beings

vs. 2 From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

a. humanity created for praise!!!

Wind cannot know God's glory in the heavens

Rain cannot know God's glory in the heavens

Rocks, sticks, flowers, beetles, bats, flamingoes, dolphins, giraffes, marmots... they all exist by God's word but can never know God's glory

BUT man was created to know God, to know that God made all these things... God has from the lips of humanity **ORDAINED PRAISE!!**

b. children and infants especially ordained for praise

i) gurgling sounds of an infant satisfied at his mother's breast is great praise for God

ii) so also God has especially ordained praise (strength) from weaklings

Hebrew: "oz" = strength or bulwark... from weakness, God ordains strength to the praise of His glorious grace

God destroys his enemies and adversaries by the weakness and humility of a child

- c. enemies and adversary destroyed by the infant

Tragedy of sin... God has enemies in his beautiful universe

Wonder of gospel... God ordains that weakness destroys those enemies

God destroys evil in the human world by the humility of trust and praise... ultimately by trust in the frailty of His Only Begotten Son, dead on the cross

James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

For this very reason, David now turns his attention to the humiliation of man... that the lofty pride of man should be slain with the sword of God immensity and power as displayed in the heavens

B. The Humility of Man Contemplated (vs. 3-4)

vs. 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 man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

1. Meditation brings humiliation

- a. in our sin, we are naturally very arrogant, vaulting ourselves forward
- b. we build Towers of Babel to vault ourselves toward the heavens
- c. BUT we never reach them... our arrogance is slain by the immensity of the universe
- d. for David, this is a sweet death... for pride is the great enemy of a true walk with God
- e. David seeks out this meditation... he purposely contemplates God's handiwork in the skies that he may be brought low

2. Meditation of the heavens

- a. NOTE: YOUR heavens... God the creator, ruler, and will be ultimately the destroyer of the heavens... they are His for He made them all
- b. the immensity of the cosmos... the sheer scale overwhelms us
- c. the moon and the stars... night-time displays of glory
- d. two great realms in creation:

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

- e. man rules over the lower realm, earth (as we shall see in a moment)

- f. sun and moon rule over the upper realm, and man cannot touch them or affect them in any way!!

Genesis 1:16-18 God made two great lights-- the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

- g. “which you have set in place” or “ordained” or “appointed”

BUT man cannot affect that role in the least... all of our power, even nuclear weapons, could not alter one bit the moons appointed motions, or the stars positions

3. God’s fingers

- a. God calls the moon and the stars works of **God’s fingers**
- b. fingers points to God’s power... it only took the movement of His fingers to accomplish this incredible display

Boastful Rehoboam: 1 Kings 12:10 “My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist”

David boasts of God, God’s little finger spun out the moon and the stars

- c. fingers also point to God’s careful, meticulous skill

The heavens were shaped and crafted by the Master artisan... every star perfectly positioned and arranged in its array

Like Dr. Philip Brand’s description of concert pianist Arthur Rubinstein’s performance of Beethoven’s *Moonlight Sonata*:

“A piano performance is a ballet of fingers, a glorious flourish of ligaments and joints, tendons, nerves, and muscles. I must sit near the stage to watch their movements. From my own careful calculations I know that some of the movements required, such as the powerful arpeggios in *Moonlight’s* third movement, are simply too fast for the body to accomplish consciously. Never impulses do not travel with enough speed for the brain to sort out that third finger has just lifted in time in order for the fourth finger to strike the next key.... I marvel too at the slow lilting passages. A good pianist controls his or her fingers independently, so that when striking a two-handed chord of eight notes, each of the fingers exerts a slightly different pressure for emphasis, with the melody note ringing the loudest. The effect of a few grams more or less of pressure in a crucial pianissimo passage is so minuscule only a sophisticated laboratory could measure it. But the human ear contains just such a laboratory, and musicians like Rubinstein gain acclaim because discriminating listeners can savor their subtle nuances of control.”

Just as Rubinstein’s fingers can play *Moonlight Sonata* with power, beauty, and precision, so the fingers of God crafted and shaped the universe to His perfect specifications

Now, of course, God does not truly have physical fingers... but human fingers were created as dim reflections of God's powers of shaping and creating

4. Conclusion: What is man??

what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

- a. David is suitably humbled by gazing at the moon and stars
- b. David appears to be nothing in his own eyes
- c. David has humbled himself, and the Lord is about to raise him up

C. The Honor of Man Established (vs. 5-8)

vs. 5-8 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: 7 all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

1. GOD DOES THINK OF MAN... HE THINK CONSTANTLY OF MAN

Psalm 139:1-4, 17-18 O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

17 How precious are your thoughts ABOUT ME, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Some people think, God's can't spin the planets in their orbits and care about my little life
However humble, it actually limits God

As overwhelming as it is, the truth is God constantly thinks about you... whether you are in flagrant disobedience, or obeying His word!!

2. God's positioning of man: a little lower than *elohim*

- a. Hebrew: "elohim" LXX "angelos"
- b. word can mean either "God" or "heavenly beings" like angels
- c. Book of Hebrews follows LXX and gives us "You have made him a little lower than angels"

In any case, God has positioned man somewhere between heaven and earth... ruling over earth, looking up to heaven... with a physical nature like beasts, with a spiritual nature like angels

This is the glory of man... God positioning of man, created to fill a mediating role between the spiritual realm and the physical

3. God's cloaking of man: glory and honor

- a. this cloaking with glory and honor must refer to creation in the IMAGE OF GOD
- b. endowed with God's nature, created to be like God

Intellectual powers: memory, creativity, reasoning and logic, planning ability, and analytical skills

Moral attributes: goodness, compassion, mercy, nurturing, power, gentleness

- c. covered with a glory that radiated man's unique role in the universe

4. God's establishment of man: ruler over His works

- a. given dominion over the physical earth

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

- b. endowed with intellectual powers, to shape and mold the earth and its creatures as God shaped and molded the creation originally

Man harnesses the oxen to pull his plow, man breeds sheep after a certain genetic pattern for maximum attributes, man breeds cattle for meat or milk according to his own knowledge

Man can even go into the sea and hunt the blue whale, the largest living thing in history, with explosive harpoons... or man can study the blue whale's eating and mating habits to bring it back from extinction

Thus David has humbled himself under God's mighty hand by studying the realm NOT under our feet... the heavens

Then David has felt himself exalted by God's mighty hand in considering God's original plan in creating man in God's image to rule over the earth

D. The Majesty of God Repeated (vs. 9)

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

David cannot end with man, but must return in His thoughts to God and His power

III. Christ's Perfect Fulfillment

A. Christ's Incarnation: The Son of Man

1. Human sin elevated man's arrogance, severely marred his ability to rule the earth properly
2. Christ became human, fully man, to atone for our sins

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Only by taking on a human body could God reconcile wicked humanity to Himself

Only by suffering physical death on the cross, and spiritual death of a sort under the wrath of God, could Christ bring us back to our rightful place under God and over physical creation

- Christ was "a little lower than the angels" when He was a little new-born in the manger and the mighty angels sang His praises
- Christ was "a little lower than the angels" when, after physically and spiritually tempted by the devil for forty days, the angels came to minister to Him and restore His strength
- Christ was "a little lower than the angels" when, after wringing out His soul in agonizing prayer in Gethsemane, the angels came and ministered to Him. Who was strong, and who weak then?
- Christ was "a little lower than the angels" when He made Himself nothing and died on the cross

All of this was in God's plan when Christ took on a human body!

B. Christ's Ministry in Jerusalem: Praised by Children

Matthew 21:15-16 But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. 16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, "'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

1. Christ's enemies opposed Him every step of the way... totally indignant at the children's praise

"Hosanna" means "O Save!!" or "Save now!!" a cry for Messiah to bring salvation to His people

2. Christ cited Psalm 8 to defend them
3. Deep concept! Others terrified of what the chief priests and teachers of the law would do if they were caught praising Jesus

4. Children were fearless and guileless... they spoke the truth in abject humility and selflessness
5. This is the exact way that God ordains salvation for each of us... saying like a lisping baby, "Please save me!!"

Matthew 18:3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

No one gets saved by being powerful and mighty! People get saved when, like weak infants they cry out to a mighty savior, Jesus Christ, and say "O save me!!"

C. Christ's Humility: Made Nothing Even to Death

1. In this Psalm, we see the standard pattern... humble yourself and God will raise you up
2. In Christ's life also, we see salvation accomplished not by strength but by weakness

Philippians 2:6-11 ... he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

3. Jesus' weakness unto death removes forever the condemnation we rightfully deserved for our sins

D. Christ's Present Glory: Sitting at God's Right Hand

1. At present, we see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, ruling over all things by title
2. However, we do not see all things presently under His feet... He still has enemies
3. Creation itself is still subjected to futility, and will be till the end
4. Humanity is still greatly in rebellion against God.
5. BUT Christ has been exalted as the perfect God-Man, and His position at the right hand of God portrays the future for every believer

E. Christ's Future Glory: Ruling Over Perfected Heaven and Earth

1. Psalm 8 depicts man ruler over the works of God's hands, but not the heavens
2. Christ, the perfect God-Man will rule over a perfected heaven and earth

Hebrews 1:10-12 He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like

a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

Ephesians 1:19-23 That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

IV. Application

A. **Worship:** Be stunned at God's world-wide majesty

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

God does all things for the glory of His name... for His world-wide reputation; He makes much of His name so that peoples all over the world will call on that name for salvation. He also makes much of His name because we were created to praise God from the days of our infancy

B. **Salvation:** Become like a little child to enter Christ's kingdom "Save Now!!"

No one enters the kingdom of heaven strong and powerful... but rather weak and humble like a nursing infant. Trust in Christ, turning away from your own accomplishments. Say with David, "What am I that you are even mindful of me!" Become like a little child and lis to your powerful Savior, "O save me!!"

C. **Sanctification:** "What is man...?"

Continued growth in Christ is dependent on two things: 1) continued humility like a child; 2) growing maturity to own up to your stewardship responsibilities in the Kingdom. Be continually weak in your own eyes. Whenever you are getting too puffed up in your own eyes, go out under a starlit sky look up, and meditate until you are humbled. Or, simply reflect on how much sin God has forgiven in your life. And gladly accept hardships from God's Fatherly hand which are designed to humble you and keep you like a dependent child:

2 Corinthians 12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

D. **Stewardship:** "You have made him ruler..."

We also must own up to our responsibilities as those created in God's image and redeemed in Christ's image... we have a role to play in this earth... to fill it, subdue it, and rule over it. This involves doing you work to the glory of God, nurturing and caring for the physical world as a steward of it, and looking forward to the day when you will inherit a portion of the new heavens and new earth.

E. **Missions:** Submit to God's world-wide plan... the majesty of His name in all the earth through Christ

God intends that the majesty of His name be proclaimed in all the earth. Looking at the stars never saved anyone. The gospel must be preached, and God has ordained that we who are Christ's disciples should do it

Live your life constantly as one under the stewardship of the Gospel

F. **Hope:** Feed your hope by meditating daily on the glory that is yet to come

Someday you will see Christ ruling with everything in the universe in open submission to Him, placed under His feet... as the God-Man, He will rule heaven AND earth, not just earth as did Adam