

Magnificent Creations
a message based on
Psalm 8

Followers of Jesus:

Simba, the young lion in the 1994 movie, “The Lion King” looks at the baboon lurking around him and asks him, “Who are you?” The baboon, whose name is Rafiki answers that question with a right-back-at-you one of his own. “The question is, Who are YOU?” And then he takes off, Simba trying to keep up, through grass, under bushes, over branches to a pond. Neil Anderson points out that when we're asked by someone, “Who are you,” we usually answer by giving our name. But see, that's not the answer. That is simply our name. So we're asked again who we are, and usually we answer by telling what we do. “I'm a pastor.” “I'm a farmer.” “I work in my home.” But that's not the answer, either, because that's not who we are. That's what we do (Neal Anderson, “Who are You?”). Who are you?

John Calvin, a writer of long ago, began his biggest work of writing by stating the following.

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern (“The Knowledge of God the Creator”).

Which comes first? Can we really know ourselves without also knowing God? Can we really know God, and not come to some sort of understanding of who we are ourselves?

How does Psalm 8 answer the identity question of who we are? You'll notice how the psalm is framed. It begins and it ends in exactly the same way, sort of like the refrain of a song.

**O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Ps 8:1, 9).**

We can't, David suggests in these lyrics, know who we are without first making a reference to who God is. Who is God? Does anyone here know God?

He introduced himself first to Moses in this way.

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the

Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex 3:14).

This is a very interesting introduction! Who is God? His answer is simply a variation of the verb, "to be." It's almost as though God wants us to know that he does indeed exist, that he is real. In the words of Francis A. Schaeffer, God is "the God who is there." Paul spoke the words in Athens.

"he [the God who made the world] is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27-28).

God simply IS. But there is more about God than simply this. Listen again to that refrain.

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

Who is God? The psalm begins and ends with the same words, a small description of who God is. For sure, God is worthy of our worship. Can it be described better than this? Why worship God? Simply because he is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. He is "our Lord," a claim of ownership as it were.

The fact that God has a name tells us a lot about him. He wants us to know him. The Bible says that God comes with a Face. The Face he comes with has a name, too. Jesus. If we want to know God, we'll get to know him when we get to know Jesus. We are not complete, we are not whole, we do not really know ourselves until we come to know God. That's important for all of us to know: male and female, married or single. We are complete when we get to know God! So I urge us all: seek him! He wants to be found by us. Once we get to know him, we'll know ourselves a whole lot better.

Jesus lifted up his eyes toward heaven and prayed: ... "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:1, 3).

That's a little of who God is; who are you? Who am I? As are many of the psalms, this one is a prayer.

**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 for him? (Ps 8:3-4).**

Do we understand what David is asking? It is an awesome sight to look up into a starlight, moonlit night. How big the world is in which we live! It would seem that God has enough to think about: why would he even think about us puny human beings? We're small compared to the universe! Why would God even care about us? We're only human, after all. The answer David gives to his question is astonishing. He is awestruck at what he sees in the human being. Now, David is quite aware of what people are like. The group called *Good Charlotte* has a song that, if you excuse my language, goes like this: "Money talks in this world/that's what idiots will say./ But you will find that this world/is just an idiot parade." David knows this, too. And yet when he thinks of who we are, he exclaims: Magnificent! Truly splendid!

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
(a little less than God is the more likely translation)
and crowned him with glory and honor (Ps 8:5).

God made us to be an image of himself! He made us to be like himself! He crowned us with glory and honor. We were made to rule. The word "glory" is usually used to describe who God is. He is glorious. He is the God of glory. Here that same word is used to describe the human. It's like David is saying, "Your glory is above the heavens [different word]. And now, God is described as setting his glory on the earth: walking with two feet, two arms, two eyes. We are an image of the glory of God!

Think about what that means. God created us out of the dust of the earth; we imitate him by digging into the creation and discovering its potential. We create things. Someone has imagined what it would be like if we could invent a way to keep track of where we are in the world: it's called a GPS, a global positioning system. If our newer vehicle ever gets stolen, we'll be able to track where it went through a GPS. If we ever lose our cell phone, which they say we'll need in case our vehicle breaks down; if we lose that, we'll be able to track where it is through a GPS system. And speaking of cell phones, I can do something called "texting," write something that appears on the screen of my cell phone, push send, and my brother who lives in Alberta can receive the words I printed on the screen of my phone! Someone has invented these things! Calvin is right when he notes that the human being is endowed with "mighty gifts."

Who are we? I would like to encourage every one of us to realize something about ourselves: we are magnificent creations. Some of us need to take this to heart. We might think of ourselves in mostly negative terms. We may even carry ourselves around in ways that say, "I'm not a worthwhile person for you to know." Perhaps we think of ourselves as boring. We might be given to apologizing a lot, saying, "I'm sorry." We may even be convinced that we are worth less than anyone else here in this

sanctuary.

God says differently! He says to us today, "I have made you in my image, in my likeness! You are not worth less. You are worth while to get to know. Did I not create you to rule over the whole earth? Dummies don't do that!"

We can't really know ourselves without first getting a glimpse of God. Psalm 8 reminds us that, yes, we are magnificent creations as human beings. We human beings stand out among all others. Yet we need to know something about ourselves that is very important. We are creations. There is no such thing as a "self-made" man or woman. We didn't create ourselves. Even the mighty gifts that we possess, what we might call talents or capabilities, are gifts in the end, gifts from God himself. The Bible says some things we need to know about ourselves.

For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? (1 Cor 4:7).

Who we are, and what we do is not because of us; it's because God has given us these things! Or think about it this way, going back to Paul's words.

"From one man [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (Acts 17:26).

I often hear people tell me how they came to live on Vancouver Island. Have we ever thought, though, that we are living here because God made it possible for us to? He has decided that we live where we live! Or think of it like this.

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money. Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:13-14).

We are all familiar with the mist or fog that often covers the mountains surrounding us. Have we ever considered that the mist is a symbol of us? All it takes is a little bit of sun, and the mist disappears! We don't know about tomorrow, despite all what the false prophets of our day insist. We are dependant on the One who made us, on the One who has given us the breath of life. We are magnificent for sure, as humans, yet we are still creations of the Maker of the heavens and the earth.