



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

This week, our scripture is an ancient hymn from the book of Psalms. It focuses on two things: Our relationship with God, and our relationship with God's created world. There is a tension between the two, and at the same time they inform each other.

In our relationship with God, it is fitting that the opening of this hymn is so personal. The opening is often rendered "O LORD, our Lord...", though the Hebrew uses two different words for Lord. The first is the personal name for God, and the second is God's title relative to us. It's as if I opened a letter with "Oh AnnaMarie, my daughter..." - it sets the personal nature of the missive, while establishing my relationship with the addressee. Here, the personal relationship is established while simultaneously addressing God as having a position of authority and rulership.

Consider the Source Psalm 8

We are also reminded that God has placed us in a similar position of dominion over nature and its wonders. It is both amazing and terrifying. We are in awe as we study the created world. Much of our scientific advancement has roots in this biblical desire to understand and control the world around us. At the same time, we must not let our power over nature lead us to assert our independence from God.

We are at right relationship with God when we recognize the beautiful gift of the world around us and are faithful stewards of this gift. We see that God is not the earth, but above and beyond it. God is instead our caretaker and does not exploit us or treat us as a commodity. We are called to imitate this connection with that which is placed under us - ruling without abusing, reigning over the earthly world while not debasing it or ourselves.

Robin Levins, First Church member

A Family Affair

Have you ever noticed a beautiful day, with blue sky and the air outside feeling just right? What about an amazing sunset with brilliant colors? God made them both. What about a stormy sky with lightning? God made those gray clouds too. God created nature all around us.

Read Psalm 8 together. We see God in all the things He made. However, sometimes we don't notice the nature around us until something big happens to get our attention.

Hurricanes can seem at odds with a world created by a loving God, but God's love is still there. Even though God created nature, He did not send the damaging hurricanes. When bad things happen, God's love can be seen through people helping one another.

Discuss together how you have seen God at work during the hurricanes. Maybe you saw a report about neighbors sharing supplies or sharing their home with people who had to evacuate. Sometimes bad things happen, but they give people a fresh chance to marvel at the world all around us.

It can be hard to stay positive, but it's important to look at the beauty in all things God made. As a family, think of some disappointments you have faced and challenge yourself to name one positive thing that resulted from it. Perhaps moving to a new house meant you're closer to friends, or a cancelled ballgame meant a family movie night.

Pray together: Dear Lord, thank you for creating all the good things in the world and for being there when bad things happen. Please help us remember your love for us and share it with others. Amen.

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

Monday: Psalm 8:1-4, 9

There's an amazing juxtaposition between the author's reverence for God's majesty and for how small and seemingly insignificant we are amidst it all.

- What is the most majestic thing you've ever witnessed in person? The Grand Canyon? The Aurora Borealis? Perhaps you found it in the totality of the recent eclipse. Maybe the birth of a child strikes you most. Dwell on your memory of this, whatever it may be.
- Take some time tonight to go outside and look at the stars. Bonus points if you can get away from the city lights when you do it. Take some time to soak it in. Download an app that can tell you what they are. Remember that several dozen that you can see sent their light thousands of years ago, and only just now reach Earth. Consider our place in such a vast universe.

Tuesday: Psalm 8:3-5

Let's return to humanity's place in this vast universe. Among the stars spanning thousands of light-years apart, among a vast world where we inhabit a tiny percentage, among all the animals of the land, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, God still decides to pay special attention to humans.

- Have you ever felt like in the grand scheme of things, you didn't matter? Why did you feel that way?
- What evidence do we find in the Biblical texts that God cares for "mortals" and treats them as special?
- What things remind you that you do make a difference in the world?

Wednesday: Psalm 8:5-8

This section echoes the second creation story in Genesis 2-3, where God gives Adam and Eve a position of power over the created world. Here as in Genesis, this dominion comes in the larger context of submission to God's rule.

- In contrast with many of the religions of the time, God is not in nature but rather nature is explicitly something created by God. What are the practical implications of this distinction?
- Have you ever been given a gift from someone you cared about when you knew the gift itself meant something special? How did you treat that gift? How did that reflect your relationship with the gift-giver?

Thursday: Psalm 144

"O Lord, what are human beings that you regard them, or mortals that you think of them?"

These words of Psalm 144:3 are strongly reminiscent of Psalm 8:4, though with a much different feel to them.

- From what circumstances is the author of Psalm 144 writing? Do you think they're different from the ones that the author of Psalm 8 faces?
- The author of Psalm 8 seems to have an optimistic view of humanity, while the author of Psalm 144 seems to harbor a pessimistic one. Which one is closer to the truth?

Friday: Hebrews 2:5-18

The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 directly while talking about the incarnation of Jesus.

- As Christians, we believe Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. Hebrews 2 hammers home how important this tenet of faith is. How does Psalm 8 inform this understanding?