

Thursday 18th June 2020

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 honour.*

*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!”*

As a child, I was fortunate enough to spend many holidays in the Middle East, staying with family friends in quiet villages in the hills and mountains. The days were spectacular, seemingly endless stretches of unbroken sunshine. But my most treasured memories are of the ink-black night-time skies filled with more stars than I ever believed possible. My mind spun as I tried to comprehend the vastness of space; the seemingly infinite number of stars and galaxies; the millions of years they have shone and will continue to shine. I am always reminded of those nights when I read this Psalm.

As a young shepherd, David would have spent many nights under those same stars and we can still feel that childlike sense of wonder, astonishment even, in these verses.

This is a hymn in praise of the awesome might of our Lord. And yet, in the middle, there is somehow room for man.

There are a number of Hebrew words for man. The one David uses here is “enos” which means frail or mortal and it emphasises the insignificance of mankind, the brevity of our timespan contrasted with the immortal glory of the Lord. As the apostle Peter would later remind us, *“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”* (1 Peter 1:24).

And yet, in spite of our frailty, David tells us that the Lord is mindful of us; that He cares for us; even that He has crowned us with glory and honour. David recognised that the love and grace that the Lord has bestowed upon us is completely undeserved. It was inexplicable to David and it makes no

more sense to us. And yet David knew it to be real and it was that experience which led him to this outpouring of joy and gratitude and praise.

How much more amazing then, that the very same immortal God became frail flesh and died for us. In the words of a modern-day psalmist:

*“Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice;
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.”*

How, then, can we not join with David in singing His praises?

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