

## **Year C**

### **Psalm 8**

“God made the angels to show His splendour - as He made animals for innocence and plants for their simplicity. But men and women He made to serve Him wittily, in the tangle of their minds.”

So said Sir Thomas More in Robert Bolt's *A Man for all Seasons*. We are unique in creation because we have the capacity to contemplate its wonder and glimpse ourselves in relation to God's awesome splendour. The psalmist, David, gazed at the

heavens above and was amazed at its size and mystery. If only he had known that he saw about 0.001% of the 100 billion stars in the Milky Way, he might have felt a good bit smaller still! Then he heard the babies cry and the children loudly play and was lost in wonder at their exploration of sound and action; discovering and being inspired by the endless possibilities that being human offers. The bringing together of the heavenly glory and the calls of a child or infant might seem strange to us but God delights in such a drawing together.

The story is told of a mother, wishing to encourage her young son's progress at the piano, who bought tickets for a performance by Paderewski, the famous Polish concert pianist. When the night arrived they found their seats near the front of the concert hall and eyed the majestic Steinway waiting on stage.

Soon the mother found a friend to talk to and the boy slipped away. When eight o'clock arrived, the spotlights came on, the audience quietened, and only then did they notice the boy up on the piano stool, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

His mother gasped in horror, but before she could retrieve her son, the master appeared on stage and quickly moved to the piano.

“Don’t stop – keep playing” he whispered to the boy. Leaning over, Paderweski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around the other side, encircling the child, to add a running obligato. Together the old master and the young novice held the crowd mesmerised.

In our lives, unpolished though we may be, it is the Master who surrounds us and whispers in our ear, time and again, “Don’t

stop – keep playing”. And as we do he augments and supplements until a work of amazing beauty is created.<sup>1</sup> For us the wonder is that he has chosen to work with us. Sometimes when we’re struggling and feeling a bit sorry for ourselves we might ask, “God, why me?” Here David from a completely different angle asked, “God, why us?” Why are we so special that we gain this privilege? And the answer to that question is not at all apparent in the Psalm. Instead, we are left marvelling at our fortune to the

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<sup>1</sup> Leadership Magazine, Spring 1983

extent that recognition and praise must return to God.

We have to go elsewhere to receive the key to unlock the fullest Christian understanding of the dynamic here. We read the following in the New Testament book of Hebrews chapter two and verses five to nine.

“It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified:

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them,

a son of man that you care for him?

You made them a little[a] lower than the angels;

you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.”

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to

them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

Here we find the writer of the Hebrews directly quoting from Psalm 8 in reference to the importance of human beings in God’s creative work. But the writer does something special. He understands humanity not through the reference of humanity in general but through one human being, Jesus Christ. It is the one human being that brings meaning and purpose to all the rest. The divine act of the exaltation and coronation of human beings that David

pondered in the Psalm is seen perfectly manifested in Jesus. It is only Jesus who can truly claim the mantle which was bestowed on all and in God's re-creation of the world and cosmos, it is Christ who bears the honour and bestows it on humanity in turn. We are created to bear God's image: we are re-created to bear Christ's image and in so doing bear God's image. How does that work? Well, it can only work through the divine relationship that exists in God. Our God is revealed as one God in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit and it is the relationship between the Son and the Father

that establishes the possibility of our transformation. Remember Philip's request to Jesus in John 14, to show us the Father? Jesus answered; "whoever has seen me has seen the Father... do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" Jesus explained that the works he does are the works of the Father who dwells in him. In other words, the image that the Son bears is that of the Father; thus the Son's work is intended to reveal the person of the Father. Furthermore it became Jesus' goal to reconcile humanity to his Father through the power of the Holy Spirit; that what was clear

in him was manifest through us. So the triune God has established the true worth of humanity through his own nature and work, all of which makes Psalm 8 such an appropriate and powerful text for Trinity Sunday.

A newly appointed minister went to visit the home of a member of his congregation. Upon arriving there, the minister discovered his host was an avid gardener, and was only too delighted to show his minister around the garden, a magnificent sea of greens, purples, blues, whites, yellows and pinks. Wanting to set the relationship off on a strong, positive

note, the minister commented, “Praise God for the beauty of his handiwork”.

But his host replied in a somewhat offended tone, “Now minister, don’t go giving all the credit to God. You should have seen this garden when the Almighty had it to himself!”

The gardener in fact had very good theology. God has designed the world in such a way that God works in partnership with us, and we with God, to achieve God’s ends. He has made us a little lower than God, and crowned us with glory and honour. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Amen.