

## "SHARING THE GREATNESS OF GOD"

Date: July 8, 2007

Text: Psalm 8

We have just returned, literally yesterday afternoon, from a trip to the Canadian Rockies and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Beautiful country but whenever we travel, and we have been to 48 states, we always return to Upstate NY with one thought: we live in a gorgeous part of God's world. In the Rockies there were magnificent waterfalls but nothing Ithaca couldn't match and there were huge potholes but again not much different from those in Little Falls where we used to live. Traveling along Lake Michigan felt like we were going along the shores of Lake Ontario. The writer of psalm 8 might have been a shepherd who also was awe-struck with the greatness of the Creator when he looked out at the hills and valleys of his countryside. "How majestic is your name in all the earth!" he cried out. Could we not make the same proclamation in Genesee County?

The greatness of God...I am not sure that in our busy and noisy society we always take the time to remember the wonder of the world around us. Chief Seattle, a very wise Native American Indian who lived 150 years ago, said back then that he didn't like to go into the white man's cities because you couldn't hear the crickets or the singing birds. Imagine what he would think if he returned to a major metropolis today! It is just because the world is so noisy and busy that a camping trip or some other way to slow down and get away becomes so important. There needs to be time to do nothing else except observe and appreciate the "beauty of the earth" as our first hymn reminded us.

Consider the wonder of divine creation compared with the wonders of modern science. Some of us can remember when TV was simply a dream. In those days one of the companies, RCA, trying to develop a television system, decided that it might be helpful to study the working of the eye of a frog which sends messages to its brain. They tried to copy the animal's method of moving messages from the eye to the brain. They ended up with a box, 3' by 3', that had 1600 light detectors, layers of electrical components and still was crude and ponderous compared to what God had created in the frog.

"O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is thy name in all the earth!" What's the greatest great thing that you can think of? Ponder that tongue twister a minute. What's the greatest great thing? God is far greater than the greatest thing that we can imagine.

This great, great, great God who created and rules over the universe has chosen to share His power with each of us. The psalmist looking up at those starry heavens is awe-struck by the majestic of the Almighty but then asks, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" You might have thought he would say that "humanity is small and insignificant" but he comes to the startling conclusion that God has made human beings a little less than Himself! The next time you get down on yourself whether it's because you missed a kick in the soccer game or got yelled at because of a messy room or, on an adult level, were made to feel worthless repeat this phrase: "I have been made a little less than the angels!"

So many of us struggle with the demon of self worth. Working at home we feel inadequate to those in the marketplace, laid off in downsizing we feel there is something wrong with us, trapped in an unhappy relationship we blame ourselves. In so many ways, we do a "job" on ourselves in terms of our worth. Yet not only do we have the words of the psalmist we have the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the ultimate declaration that we are very, very important in God's sight and worthy of all the divine love that can be bestowed upon us.

The Bible speaks of the greatness of God and then goes on to declare that which is so very wonderful and yet humbling: This majestic, omnipotent God has called us to be partners! As partners we are to be responsible for the creation that God has placed all around us. We have to take responsibility for the pollution, the violence, the hunger. If we are share with our Creator, then having clean lakes and beaches is something we all need to care about. We can do something in being more careful about our littering and by encouraging our government to continue to work on cleaning up Lake Ontario. And certainly plenty of discussion about global warming needs to be on the table.

Do any of you recall watching the TV show "Dr. Quinn" that used to be on Sat. nights? The Native American Indians on that show were not portrayed as savages but rather as very wise people who have a great deal to teach us concerning partnering. Dr. Quinn was always going off to ask the chief advice on ancient herbal medicines. It is no accident in this sermon based on Psalm 8 that Native Americans provide most of the illustrative material. Land and human beings are part of the same whole for the Indians. They never could understand the white people's drive to buy land since the Indians didn't think that they owned it but rather the earth in all of its parts was the property of the Great Spirit.

Today it isn't easy balancing economic development and the need to provide jobs and our responsibility to preserve the earth but Christians have to try to lead the way. Being God's partner doesn't mean as I have heard some say that we can do with our natural resources what we pleased. The owner of a huge SUV interviewed on TV when gas prices went above \$3 a gallon was asked if he planned any changes in the way he lived. He was quite blunt: "I don't plan to change my lifestyle so they just better find more oil up in the wilderness of Alaska!" Sadly that has been a practice of many for all too long. God created everything; we need to take care of it.

The psalmist reminds us of two grand ideas as we move into the summer season: we worship a great God who created all things and who cares deeply about His creation; secondly, we are called to live in ways that are pleasing to our Maker and which will enhance all that God has made. I hope that all of us will put these concepts into practice this summer and the months and years ahead.

Little children instinctively understand the meaning of Psalm 8. A child in England offered this prayer

Thank God for rain  
And the beautiful rainbow colors  
And thank God for letting children  
Splash in puddles

Let all of us thank God for the gift of life and the chance to splash in a few puddles.