

God's Majesty and Our Humanity

Psalm 8

April 7th, 2019

Big idea: God's majesty is displayed through all the earth and His dominion is shared with human beings.

Intro

The Pale Blue Dot (photo) –

1990 as Voyager speed through space it sent back a series of pictures, 60 of those images taken from 4 billion miles away were compiled into this image.

Carl Sagan, atheist astronomer - That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident ... ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

David didn't have access to a telescope much less a Voyager beaming back images. From what he saw and considered, he was amazed. As we gain more scientific knowledge of the vastness of the universe, should we be more amazed or less?

But Carl Sagan goes on to say, "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves."

Neil deGrasse Tyson – somewhat less eloquently put it 4/3/2019 on twitter – The Universe is blind to our sorrows and indifferent to our pains. Have a nice day!

It's on that last line that Carl Sagan and Psalm 8 come to different conclusions.

While the "universe" may be blind to our sorrows and indifferent to our pains, the creator of the universe is not.

This psalm focuses on God's majesty and marvels that God cares about us.

1. God's name is ***majestic*** in all the earth. (8:1, 9)
 - a. His name IS majestic in all the earth – not that it should be or will be.
 - b. The initial reference to God as "LORD, our Lord" points to this.
 - i. Although the same word "Lord" is used in English, two different words are used in Hebrew, and the all caps in the first "LORD."
 - ii. The first "LORD" translates "YHWH", God's unique name.
 1. Exod. 3:14 ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"
 2. It means that God simply exists. He didn't begin. He won't end. He just is.
 - iii. The second "Lord" translates Adonai, a title that references God's might and power and ownership over His creation.
 - c. No reality exists behind God
 - i. God's personality and power are owing to Himself and no one or nothing else. He simply is.
 - ii. God is self existing – He is the necessary first cause for all of creation.

- iii. Why do I exist? Why am I the way I am?
 - 1. My parents passed on a set of genes, raised in a certain home, in a certain town, certain part of the country, certain country, certain cultural time period, etc.
- iv. He had no beginning. If you rewind back in time before the world, the planets, the stars were all created, God was already there in the fullness and independence of the trinity.
- v. “The utterly self-determined character of an everlasting God is the endpoint of all our questions. There comes a point when you stand face to face with absolute reality and realize that He simply is who He is.” John Piper
- d. God is an inexhaustible source of energy
 - i. **Isaiah 40:28** Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.
 - ii. AS the creator of everything, all energy ultimately comes from Him as well. There is nothing for Him to plug into or get energy from. He cannot wear out or become tired.
 - iii. Is there anything else like God in this way? Is there anything that won’t wear out or tire without outside energy? Me? My dog? My home? The sun?
- e. This majesty of the unique and absolute God is everywhere on earth. He has no viable competitors. He has no victorious enemies. He will have no successful rivals.
- f. His splendor is displayed above the heavens, a theme David returns to in v. 3.
- g. But how does He display this majesty? What does He do with it?
 - i. In between verses 1 and 9, this psalm tells us.
 - ii. It is a peculiar display of majesty.
- 2. Yet He defeats His enemies through the **weakness** of children (8:2)
 - a. In v 1 we see God’s glory and majesty as the self-existing one displayed throughout the whole earth. But there is a whiplash in v. 2 as we see His response to His enemies.
 - i. Psalm 2 showed us that God laughs at the attempted triumph of His enemies. He laughs because it is futile. He will accomplish His good plans.
 - ii. In Psalm 8 we see that God in His great majesty chooses to work through vessels of great weakness.
 - iii. Infants and nursing babes – infants and young children – the pinnacle of human weakness. Adorable. Hilarious. Joy bringing. But weak, vulnerable, and completely dependent on others.
 - iv. But what does it mean that God has established strength from the mouth of infants and nursing babes?
 - b. God preserved Moses as a little baby to be raised in Pharaoh’s household and then 80 years later deliver God’s people from Egypt.
 - c. The greater example is Jesus, entering humanity as a vulnerable baby.
 - d. But notice here the emphasis is on what the children say. It’s from their mouths that His strength is established or shown. How? Jesus tells us in Matthew 21.

- i. **Matthew 21:15-16** ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, "Do You hear what these *children* are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF'?"

- 1. The Hebrew version said "established strength"
- 2. Jesus quoted and preserved for us in the Greek of the NT as "prepared praise" showing the way in which their mouths establish strength and silence the enemy.
- 3. And that's exactly what happened. The enemy is silenced. The chief priests and scribes in Matthew 21 are silenced. The children are right and they, in their opposition to the Messiah, are wrong.

e. Consistent with God's pattern of working through weakness to display His own strength.

- i. **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** ²⁶ For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; ²⁷ but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no man may boast before God. ³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

3. Yet He entrusts frail humanity with dominion over the earth (8:3-8)

a. Humanity is miniscule compared to the expanse of space. (8:3)

- i. Returns to the majesty of God displayed in the heavens, with a little more detail.
- ii. David as a shepherd growing up and a soldier often on the run, would have spent many nights out under the stars. They didn't know then what we know now about the immensity of the universe, the distance to the stars, but he knew enough by observation to be amazed and humbled.
 - 1. Example of sleeping outside while camping near Stanley.
- iii. How much more so now that we have a growing but still incomplete grasp of the scale of the universe?
- iv. David could likely see 2,000-3,000 stars on a clear night. If he had a good pair of binoculars? 100,000. What if David knew that if the Milky Way galaxy were the size of the entire continent of North America, our solar system would fit in a coffee cup, and that the Milky Way is one of perhaps 100 billion such galaxies in the universe? (Dale Ralph Davis makes reference to Philip Yancy for this comparison)
- v. If you could see all the stars in the Milky Way and count them each 1 per second, you would be counting stars for 2,500 years, estimates Louie Giglio.
- vi. Our own sun burns up four million tons of mass every second, yet it's so huge that at this rate it would last 5-6 billion more years. (Adapted from Giglio)
- vii. To produce the same energy we would have to explode a 100 billion hydrogen bombs every second.

- viii. "A pinhead heated to the temperature of the center of the Sun would emit enough heat to kill anyone who ventured within a thousand miles of it." James Jeans, British astronomer
- ix. "Each inch of the sun burns with the brightness of 650,000 candles." John Farndon, author of many books on science
- x. The Pale Blue Dot (photo) from our introduction –
 - 1. David didn't have access to a telescope much less a Voyager beaming back images. From what he saw and considered, he was amazed. As we gain more scientific knowledge of the vastness of the universe, should we be more amazed or less?
- b. God cares for people as His image bearers. (8:4-5)
 - i. He asks the questions, "what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?"
 - 1. He doesn't wonder IF God cares about us. He knows it. But he wonders why.
 - 2. The second line refers to the "son of man" refers to our frailty as those that God made out of the dust of the earth. It's used throughout the OT to refer to our humanity, 100 times in Ezekiel alone. In the NT it is used of Jesus with the definite article, "THE son of man" as the second Adam who succeeded where the first Adam failed.
 - ii. James Sire in *The Universe Next Door*, "So people who are theists see themselves as a sort of midpoint – above the rest of creation (for God has given them dominion over it) and below God (for people are not autonomous, not on their own)."
 - iii. Eastern mysticism makes humans God and therefore elevates them too high. Naturalism makes humans indistinguishable except by degree of development from animals and the rest of the earth, therefore lowering them too far.
 - iv. The word translated "God" in the NASB is often translated "angels" or "heavenly beings." It could mean either depending on context. When it is quoted in the NT and applied to Jesus in His incarnation it is clearly talking about angels.
 - 1. Hebrews 2:5-9 ⁵ For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. ⁶ But one has testified somewhere, saying, "WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? ⁷ "YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; ⁸ YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET." For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. ⁹ But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.
 - a. Emphasis here in translation appears quite clear that it is referring to angels and that Jesus was made for a little while lower than the angels so that he could die.
 - v. He made us lower than the angels but crowned with glory and majesty.
 - 1. Our human dignity is derived from God. We have dignity because He made us in His image.
- c. God placed people to rule over His creation. (8:6-8)

- i. What does God have for frail, tiny humans made in His image to do? Why do we even come up in a psalm that begins and ends with “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth”?
 1. We are here to exercise dominion on God’s behalf over the world He has made.
 2. Man is made in the image of God in that we reflect God and we represent God.
 - ii. This is a restatement of Genesis 1:26-28
 1. **Genesis 1:26-28** Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
 - iii. God chooses to show His strength through the mouths of infants and children. God chooses to show His strength through human weakness.
4. Reflecting on Psalm 8
- a. **Recognize** God’s greatness displayed through what He has made.
 - b. **Marvel** at God’s care for you.
 - i. “Who on Earth are we that the awesome King of all eternity would spare a thought in our direction? Why would the God of yesterday, today, and forever- the One who was, is, and is to come- choose to bestow His loving attention upon the likes of us? The God of unspeakable glory is speaking to us in unmistakable words of love and grace.” – Matt Redman
 - ii. Creation displays God’s greatness. Communion displays God’s grace.
 - iii. This psalm displayed our surprising dignity, given to us by God. Communion makes clear our depravity, our need, our problem.
 - iv. We were made by God, for God, as the pinnacle of His creation, but we turn away.
 - v. **Isaiah 53:6** All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.



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2

Carl Sagan, "That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident ... ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam."

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