

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: June 10<sup>th</sup>: Psalm 8: Some Notes

A praise psalm short enough to read in a number of versions – including The Message version:

God, brilliant Lord,  
Yours is a household name.  
Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you;  
Toddlers shout the songs  
That drown out enemy talk,  
And silence atheist babble.  
Look up at your macro skies, dark and enormous,  
Your hand-made sky-jewellery,  
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.  
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder  
Why do you bother with us?  
Why take a second look at our way?  
Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,  
Bright with Eden's dawn light.  
You put us in charge of your hand-crafted world,  
Repeated to us your Genesis-charge,  
Made us stewards of sheep and cattle,  
Even animals out in the wild,  
Birds flying and fish swimming,  
Whales singing in the ocean deeps.  
God, brilliant Lord,  
Your name echoes around the world.

This psalm uses the Inclusio device: ending echoes beginning. This seems to be a David psalm: the shepherd boy would have seen a lot of the sky at night (no light pollution). Neither young David nor older David had any concept of just how big (and “growing”) the universe is.) The psalm has been described as Genesis Chapter 1 set to music. The King David would have been conscious of the responsibilities that God gives to humans. At a time of gods behind every bush, this psalm is strikingly mono-theistic. We can learn from children!

Hebrews 2: 5-9, Ephesians 1: 19-22, and 1 Corinthians 15: 24-27 are quoting Psalm 8. Maybe Shakespeare had the psalm in mind too when he wrote Act 2 Scene 2 of “Hamlet”: “What a piece of work is man.....” (A Ruth footnote: both David and Shakespeare may have used what could now be described as sexist language, but I am absolutely sure they were not being deliberately sexist – mankind is humankind.) Note that our relationship with

creation is responsible and accountable: a gardener's responsibility, not an asphalter's responsibility!

One of those psalms which is both We and I. God and Lord in the opening is NOT a way of avoiding repetition. There are two different Hebrew words with different meanings. First God's personal name revealed to Moses; then a Master/Sovereign word. Matthew 21: 16 may well be a Jesus Psalm 8 quote: kids are wiser than we credit them with being. (Similarly, elderly people and "simple" people.)\_ As we said recently, wisdom is a bit different from "well-educated" or "clever".

Pause for thought as to what prayer is about: "Handing it to God" is quite a good way of describing prayer; but we need to keep our hands open for God to hand it back!