

Crowned with Glory and Honor
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
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Psalm 8

¹ O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
⁹ O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
or mortals, that you care for them?

⁷ You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honor,
⁸ subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, ⁹but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹²saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

Psalm 8 is a favorite of mine, as a beautiful reminder of how much God loves us. “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.” God loves us so. We are among the great creations like the moon and the stars and somehow, we are even greater. That somehow is that God has chosen us to be made in God’s image. Of all the wondrous things in this world, we are the ones made in God’s image.

The author of Hebrews is testifying to the greatness of Jesus, who was both made in God’s image and God together. In so doing, the author takes some liberties in his interpretation of Psalm 8. We first heard, “what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet;” our letter-writer writes, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.” The psalmist claims us little lower than God. This wouldn’t work in talking about Jesus so the author of the letter to the Hebrews says instead, “you have made them **for** a little **while** lower than the **angels**.”

Now the title of the letter as a letter “to the Hebrews” is very unlikely the title for a letter sent to a specific community of believers. It is more likely that the name came from a misunderstanding of this letter’s preoccupation with the Hebrew Bible.¹ Knowing that, we can be certain of an intentional reference to Psalm 8 and we can safely believe that the hearers would have known that, too, even though it’s referenced by saying that “someone has testified somewhere.” So the hearers, and now each of us, can identify that there are differences from the original text. Because Jesus was not like us, even though he was like us, the psalm cannot apply exactly as it was once written. Jesus, not lower than God but actually God, would, in human form, be slightly lower than angels and only for awhile. Humans are humbly and always lower than God.

Yet, despite our lower rank, because we who are sanctified have the same Father as Jesus, the one who sanctifies, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. That word “ashamed” may catch your ears for it’s not used often in the New Testament, only in nine verses, one of which comes later in

¹ Charles B. Cousar’s *The Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996)

the same letter. In this letter, both references speak of the reasons why God and Jesus are *not* ashamed of us. Because we all have one Father, Jesus is not ashamed to call us siblings. And, Hebrews 11:15-16 speaks of Abraham's descendants, of which we are included, saying, "they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." Because we desire God's kingdom come, God's will be done, God is not ashamed to be our God. And because we have been sanctified, made holy, set apart for God, Jesus considers us brothers and sisters.

Surely, our desire for God's will to be done is the action of the Holy Spirit within us. And *we* cannot set ourselves apart for God, only God can do that. So we find more gifts from God: above and beyond all that we might do to make God ashamed, God's actions are more powerful and final, making us worthy despite ourselves. Despite ourselves, we are crowned with glory and honor. And not only each of us but every single person around us; yes, even *that* person. Recognizing and honoring those crowns is largely what the work of mission is, and many faiths have ways of expressing such honor. From the language of yoga, which we get through Hinduism, we find the term "Namaste." Literally meaning "I bow to you," Namaste is a recognition and acknowledgement of the divine spark in another person.² When we acknowledge and honor one another, we can't help but also acknowledge and honor God.

Earlier this year we supported the mission work of Al and Ellen Smith, who work with the Roma people, people who are, at best, invisible in their communities, and, at worst, looked down upon, shunned, discriminated against, and persecuted. Al and Ellen honor the image of God in the people with whom they work by treating them as equal and working for justice in their names. The Peacemaking Offering we gather today will be used locally in support of The Big Yellow House, on the southwest corner of East and South, for their work on behalf of children who have experienced trauma. Recall the last two weeks' sermons – care for the little children, for those in the lowest echelons?

The Peacemaking Offering will also be used nationally and internationally for work toward justice. As we heard in the video last week, God intends for everyone to thrive. It is never acceptable or justifiable that any child of God should be used, abused, or treated as property, ever. So we offer, with generosity, our prayers and our gifts to help in the work which elevates people to their rightful place as ones created in God's image and crowned with glory and honor, to end injustices, even if it only happens one at a time.

It is no coincidence that we collect this offering on World Communion Sunday. As we gather around this table, we do so in celebration of the promises which have been given through Christ, including the promise that the least will be made greatest, that the last shall be first. We come, not blindly seeing only those who look and live like us, but with our eyes open to our brothers and sisters

² <http://www.yogajournal.com/basics/822>

around the world. We come, rightly uncomfortable with all we have as we recognize how little others have. We come awakened again to the truth of injustice. We gather around this table not to share our sorrows of what could be but to seek strength to effect what can be. We come in celebration because we are reminded that God is not ashamed to be our God and Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters. We come to receive the Holy Spirit and carry the Spirit's inspiration into our days and nights, renewed in our own missions to seek and recognize and acknowledge the crowns of others, and of ourselves. We come in communion with one another, with the world, with God – with a vision of what this world can be, and a foretaste of the life to come.

Let us pray: God of each of us, grant us eyes to see you in all those around us and hands to bring your justice into this world. Amen.