

GOD'S CREATION REVEALS HIS NAME

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

The eighth Psalm asks the Church a rhetorical question that also serves to open and close an unending hymn of praise:

YHWH, our Adonai, how excellent is Your Name in all the earth...¹

Those words frame tonight's song given to be proclaimed in the Church on the Eve of the Name of Jesus. They form a question answered by the Psalmist himself in the body of the text, in the lines which fall between its repetition. From them, we learn that God's Name is a sign, an impression, of His revealed nature. That nature was made most clear when He took on our flesh, in order to save us from our sins. The Divine Nature and Name are tied together in a bond that unites to God all who bear and continue to call upon the Name of God in Christ Jesus, both now and forevermore. That is certainly good news for a few of us, said to be seven percent of all people who go to bed to fall asleep before the clock strikes midnight and the calendar changes (that factoid was broadcast on a local radio station a couple of days ago).

For the majority of people around the world, the turning of the page which marks the month and day the year and the ticking of the clock seems to herald hopes and dreams yet to be realized. For many people, it appears that the changing of a page and passing of a minute, for a while, serve to wipe away thoughts of unrealized dreams and dashed hopes of the year just past. One needs only to reflect on that which has already been celebrated as this fallen world has turned, marking a New Year in each successive time zone. One of the most wonderful celebrations appears to have been that in Dubai, around 1p.m. our time (midnight theirs). About a half million fireworks were fired off on and around the world's tallest building. In a glory of light and sound, crowds there, and audiences who happened to be tuned in at that time, witnessed about five minutes of glory in the night. That one should be, once certified, a new world's record to be listed in

¹ *Psalm 85:2a, b, and 10.*

the Guinness' World Records. Whatever record may have been broken, whatever man does to celebrate his hopes and dreams for any New Year, it will never outshine in glory that which God established for our enjoyment. When you leave this place tonight, as the sky darkens, look up into our beautiful, clear Arizona sky and behold the fulfillment of our words in tonight's Psalm:

YHWH, our Adonai, how excellent is Your Name in all the earth Your praise which reaches up unto the heavens... When I see Your heavens, (made) from the works of Your fingers, moon and stars which You set in their places; what is man, that You think of him; and (the) Son of Man, that You care for Him?²

It is on evenings such as this, nights when the minute, hour, day, month, and year all change in a moment, that one can be given to contemplate that which moved King David (according to the superscription added to tonight's Psalm) to engrave his words of wonder in a song of praise.³ (Those of us who have attended each of the services of this Nativity Season by now are beginning to recognize how full of praise Psalms this season is)! Hear again of the wonder of God's creation which reveals His Name:

When I see Your heavens, (made) from the works of Your fingers, moon and stars which You set in their places; what is man, that You think of him; and (the) Son of Man, that You care for Him?⁴

St. Paul uses those references to the wonders of the night sky to declare:

For the unseen (attributes) of Him from (the) creation of the cosmos by the things which have been made are being continually perceived, being clearly seen, both (the) eternal power of Him and Godhead, so that they are without legal defense, because knowing God not as God they glorified Him nor thanked Him, but became vain in their reasonings, and (it was) darkened the undiscerning heart of them⁵

While the majority of the world rejoices or sorrows in the turning of the year, they do so without true faith in the saving Creator. He Who founded the world, and the

² Psalm 85:2, 4-5.

³ To (the) choirmaster; upon the Gittith, (a) Psalm of David. (Psalm 8:1)

⁴ Psalm 85:4-5.

⁵ Romans 1:20-21.

celestial lights which allowed our ancestors to mark the changing of the hours, days, months, and years, is not beheld by those whose hearts are darkened in unbelief. They reject that which their eyes behold. They create all kinds of theories, myths and legends to explain the wonders which have been placed by God for us to enjoy.

That is true of those who have no light in themselves, those who have continued to reject the Name of God which He desires to place upon them. It is also true for you in those times when you have your sight so focused inwardly that you will not allow yourself to behold the beauty and wonder about you. How many times in this passing year have you, at some time of stress, or sorrow, failed to look to the majesty of the mountains about us, or to the starry hosts which, out here away from the city lights, make it, at times, almost as easy to see as during the daylight?

Know that God knew you would have times like that, of failing to wonder and give thanks for all He has done for and given to you. That is why He came into this creation, so darkened by sin. God came to be one with us to bring us light, hope, peace, joy and love in His Son, our Messiah, Savior, Jesus, "God with us," our kinsman Redeemer, all the Names of God in One Persons, all that the Name of God reveals.

We who continue to return to the light of the Truth in ourselves are free to offer praise to God. We do so because we can behold the excellence of His Name in the creation around us. Yes, each year, month, and perhaps day and hour of any year has its share of joy and sorrow. Yet, through all of that, if we, as did the ancients who were not so occupied with non-personal forms of communication as we, if we merely look up to the heavens on a given night – especially in the desert – we will behold the form of God's excellent Name. God can be beheld by those whose eyes have been opened in the Faith, in the beauty of His creation, fallen though it may be. Why even the smallest humans, exposed to the wonder of God's Name, revealed in His Word and works, can be heard to rejoice. Our Psalm declares:

From (the) mouth of babies and sucking children You have built (a) fortress because of the ones showing hostility toward You; to cause to stop those showing hostility to You and those taking vengeance.⁶

Those words take us to the heart of this night's praise Psalm. They speak of Jesus, God's Salvation for sinners like you and me. How do we know that to be true?

Jesus Himself, as a grown man, in His Office of Prophet, declares that those words are about Him. The event that occasioned Jesus' confession of the central Person declared in our Psalm was none other than the day we call, Palm Sunday. Then, as the crowds chanted, "Hosanna! Save Now!" to the Son of David, Jesus proclaimed that their call was to Him as the One Whom the Father had sent to be, as the Psalm says, a fortress, the One to stop those who showed hostility to God, and the One who halted those who were taking human vengeance on God. Jesus sees the eighth Psalm as speaking of Himself as Protector, Savior and the One Who would take in Himself the wrath of sinners against God. From His lead, St. Paul, and the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews also found Christ Jesus as the One revealed in this night's Psalm. In Hebrews it is recorded:

For it is not to angels He subjected the inhabited (earth) the things about to be, about which we speak. But it is solemnly witnessed somewhere some saying, "What is man, that You remember him; or (the) Son of Man, that You observe Him? You made Him inferior only to (the) heavenly beings, with glory and honor You crowned Him, all things You subjected underneath the feet of Him."⁷

St Paul, in two of his letters to the Church, takes the words of tonight's Psalm and applies them to our Savior, whose Name means that which He is:

You have caused to make Him ruler over all Your hands have made; all thing, You have placed under His feet.⁸

That is good news for you whose names have been connected to His. For, as God joined you to Himself as you died with Christ and rose to new life in Him through the Water and Word of Holy Baptism, He joined you to His Body, the Church on earth

⁶ Psalm 8:3.

⁷ Hebrews 2:5-8a.

⁸ Psalm 8:7.

and in heaven. As our Head, Jesus has been lifted above all power, rule, authority in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, so too have we, have you, who have become part of His Body, been lifted up. Your place as part of His body places you somewhere above all that which is beneath His feet. If, in terms of the body of Christ, you are just part of the sole of His left foot, you are still above the rest of creation. For where our Head is, there is found His body, in all its members. That eternal reality declared again now in this time as the minutes march on, the day ends, the month ceases, and the old year passes away, so that you may truly continue to have a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, even as you chant with all the faithful in heaven and on earth these words in the Faith that God's excellent Name is also Your name:

YHWH, our Adonai, how excellent (is) Your Name in all the earth!⁹

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Eve of the Name of Jesus (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 8; Isaiah 30:15-17; Romans 8:31b-39; Luke 12:35-40

December 31, 2013

Pastor Michael H. Merchonise

Soli Deo Gloria

⁹ *Psalm* 8:10.