

I invite you to take out the Pew Bibles that are in front of you, and to turn to Psalm 8. Remember the old Sunday School trick: open to the middle of the Bible and you are close to the Psalms...

While you are doing that, I want to thank Del Jordahl for sharing nature pictures with us this morning. A few weeks ago when we were planning for this Sunday morning worship, we remembered that this would be the time of the year when leaves are changing color and falling. This change of season draws us to nature in a special way.

We decided it would be a good time to look at a nature Psalm – Psalm 8 – and to consider how God meets us through the creation. Would you read Psalm 8 with me..

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Last weekend Jan and I were in Eau Claire, WI visiting our daughter who is in her freshman year at the University there. For much of the summer Emily prepared for college in this way: gathering shampoos and hairbrushes, socks and shoes, notebooks and calculators.

When I dropped Emily off at Eau Claire at the end of August, she removed her 5 boxes of stuff from the car – yeah, she got all of her earthly stuff down to 5 boxes. Absolutely amazing! She put her 5 boxes in her dorm room.

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I looked at her and she looked at me – and I think we both tried pretty hard not to cry. I know I was trying really hard. I said “good-bye, see you at Thanksgiving,” turned and left her with her boxes of stuff.

As I departed Eau Claire I was thinking: “Life is more than boxes of stuff; so much more.” I prayed that Emily, who was going to a college where she knew absolutely no one, would have ... what? Friends.

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You have a great friend in heaven. When you look up at night and see the majesty of stars and the galaxies, you may be reminded of that in a powerful way. David was. I want to remind us of that this morning.

### *1. The Name of the Lord: "O LORD, our Lord."*

The Psalm begins with God's name – first and last. We begin with those two words for God. Notice how they are the same word but are written differently.

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- The first LORD – all in capital letters – is the official name of God. It is the name by which God comes to us all dressed up. "Yahweh" is the Hebrew word.
  - The second Lord – in normal lettering – is the name of God when he is among us as the one who works daily in this world. "Adonai" is the Hebrew word.
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What difference does it make – LORD with capital letters or Lord in regular letters?

When I was thinking about that I was sitting at a Vocal Concert at Moorhead High School. Out to sing came these boys in tuxes, and these girls in long formal dresses. I was used to seeing these same young men and women in soccer clothing. Here they were all dressed. And, oh my, did they sing!

- I picture Yahweh – capital letters – as all dressed up. He brings all of the best with him: good food, good health, good manners, good life. Sometimes God comes to us all dressed up.
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Then there is that second word for God: the every day word for an everyday God. I told my Bible study class that one of my earlier memories of my Dad is his dirty hands. He was a mechanic and he always had grease in the cracks of his hands. I felt comfortable being held in hands that worked for me.

- I picture Adonai – regular letters – as God in his work clothes. He gets his hands dirty working in this world. I feel comfortable knowing this week is in his hands.
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It is this God of variety whom the Psalmist lifts up in praise. We need this God:

- Some of us today need to thank this God for a wonderful week. We have experienced blessing after blessing, and we are bursting to give thanks for the good things that have happened.

- Some of us need to ask God to help us with a sticky problem. It might be financial or it might be job related – it might be anything. But God needs to be a part of the solution.
- Some of us need to ask God to open doors. That was what I needed to ask God last week – to open a door to find us a secretary that matched our needs here at Pont. Then, last Thursday evening, we heard the door creaking open and in walked Jennifer, who will become our Secretary.
- Some of us need to come to God for his healing powers. It was my privilege to be with Bert Stangeland’s brother earlier this week, and to ask God for his healing power to flow. And it did.
- Some of us need to simply spend time with God. I was having a challenging week at one point... I took some time to listen to a new worship music CD. I was lifted up. Sometimes we just need to spend time with our good God. *“He never sleeps, he never slumbers...”*

Psalm 8 begins by inviting us call upon the “LORD, our Lord.”

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## *2. The Heart of the Lord: “What are people that you should think about them?”*

Next, Psalm 8 invites us into the very heart of the Lord, by asking us to remember what God is thinking about. What have you been thinking about today?

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- If you are a young person, have you been thinking about what you are going to do on this day off from school? Maybe planning on spending some time spent with a friend? Maybe some time on the old X-box, or on the cellphone?
  - If you are a parent, have you been thinking about taking your child to the Zoo? Or, maybe you have been thinking about how your child needs new shoes, because they are growing – and you smile a little at that thought.
  - If you are close to retirement age, maybe you have been thinking about the stock market prices? Maybe you are thinking about a little trip to celebrate 40 years of hard work, and of volunteering to help where you have always wanted to help if you had the time.
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What have you been thinking about? It is your heart that leads the way of your thoughts. Where has your heart led you?

Do you want to know what God has been thinking about? God has been thinking about you. In particular, God has been thinking about how to connect with you.

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In Genesis chapter 2 we are told of God delighting in making man and woman. God makes man out of river bed dirt – a pretty straight forward creation. Then God makes woman out of parts of a man – a pretty complicated piece of creation. Which explains a lot? Just kidding!

What the story tells us is that God used his personal touch to create man and woman. Then in the next chapter man and woman turn away from the touch of God. Relationships are broken.

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In Mark Jesus tells of how upset he is by divorce, and of how upset he is when a child is harmed. What Jesus is upset by is broken relationships.

But Jesus is not just upset. He is passionate about restoring relationships. That is what God is thinking about – reconnecting broken relationships.

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Do you know the story of Homan Walsh? Homan – let's just call him Walsh – Walsh flew a kite over the Niagara River near the falls. He did that because in 1847 there was no bridge – no way to connect the people on the opposite sides of the river.

Walsh flew a kite 600 feet across the River, trailing a string. Then the string was attached to a heavier string, and pulled across. The heavier string was – you get the picture. A bridge was built – a connection for people.

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God is always trying to connect us to himself and to one another. The Bible has many images of that.

- God says we are like a sheep in a flock – we need to be connected to the shepherd and to the flock. [Psalm 100:3]

- God says we are like a stone in a building – we need the cornerstone and we need the other stones. [Ephesians 2:20]
  - God says that we are like a member of a family – we need the head of the family and we need brothers and sisters like crazy Aunt June and Flaky Uncle George. [1 Timothy 3:15]
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God has been thinking today about you – God wants you connected.

If you are not connected to a church family, we are looking for more family members. If you have been wandering lately, we would like to invite you to come home. In the name of Jesus we want to send across that first string, so that connections can be made. God has been thinking about you today.

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### *3. The Purpose of the Lord: “You gave them charge of everything you made.”*

Psalm 8 now moves into the area of this question: “What am I going to do today?” The Psalm puts it this way: “*You gave them charge of everything you made...*”

I remember one of the first times I ever felt in charge. It came with my first job, and my first paychecks. I was about 13 at the time, and had a paper route. Suddenly I, like Howard Hughes, was a rich person.

Everyday I stopped at the grocery store and bought a Three Musketeers, a Snickers, and a sugary drink to wash it down. I was in charge after school, and it felt... Well, after a while I felt sick.

My mom noticed this new found freedom I had, and how I was handling it. She started meeting me after school, sending me to the grocery store to buy bread, and milk, and an occasional treat. I started feeling much better.

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The Bible says that God gave them charge of everything God made.

- God put us in charge so that we could be giving. One of the central teachings of the Bible is to be a tither, be a giver.

- God put us in charge so that we could be forgivers. This is another central teaching of our faith. For example: How many times are we to forgive?
- God put us in charge so that we could be creative. At Confirmation on Wednesday we reminded ourselves that we were made in the image of God. And that means that, like God, we are creative.
- God put us in charge so that we could re-create. Every week things need to be built up again. The Amish community in Nickel Mines is showing us all this week how to re-create.

The weekly Amish newspaper Die Botschaft, had such an air of calm. When the Oct. 9 edition of the weekly Amish Newspaper is published tomorrow, readers will find the kind of news they have come to expect: news of appendectomies, tame foxes and the corn harvest, newborn babies and fishing experiences.

The paper will reflect the loss of life in Nickel Mines, where Amish girls were shot, and five died. But the paper will not devote too many inches to the incident. It is not that the Amish community does not care, or is not hurting. The weekly paper has never devoted too much time to murder or war. They devote space to life.

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God put us in charge of creation to nurture life. God has forgiven you today, and promised you heaven. So go this week and nurture life. That is our assignment. Look to the heavens and see that God is astounding in what he can do. Nurture the life that has been given. *“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name. Amen!”*