

God's Playlist Sermon Series
Psalm 8
March 1, 2026
Rev. Dr. Kory Wilcoxson

I was told the view was going to be spectacular, but so far, all I saw were trees. I was on a hike in Red River Gorge on the only nice day we'd had in weeks, which also happened to be my birthday. I was celebrating another year of being upright by hiking to Hanson's Point, which promised some truly spectacular views. But so far, the 2.5-mile trek to the point had been nothing but roots that threatened to trip me up and make me less than upright, mud that caked my shoes, and lots and lots of trees.

That's a bit like the slog through Psalm 7, a song about just how evil the psalmist's enemies are. "Whoever is pregnant with evil conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment. Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made. The trouble they cause recoils on them; their violence comes down on their own heads." It's easy to get tripped up by this kind of rhetoric, to forget that there is a God bigger than any enemy we can conceive, to get bogged down in the doom and gloom.

But then...but then, you arrive at Psalm 8. "O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth." It's like emerging from a dense thicket of trees onto Hanson's Point, which gives a 270-degree breathtaking view of Half Moon Arch and Pinch 'Em Tight Point, a view that makes you just want to sit down and look around and be reminded of how big God is and how small you are. Incidentally, I did that hike again yesterday. The view is...there's no other word for it...majestic.

Psalm 8 sits like a rose between the two thorns of Psalms 7 and 9, both of which are troubling songs about how persecuted the psalmist is. But Psalm 8 is this exhale, this deep breath in the midst of troubling times when the psalmist reminds himself that the God who created him is so much bigger than the enemies that surround him. If just for a moment, darkness and suffering are driven away by the commanding vision of the sovereign God of the created universe and God's unfathomable care for humanity. Sometimes, when we're troubled by something, it's good to stop and remember God is in the midst of the mess and the mire.

Psalm 8 starts with praise, always a good place to start with God. I tend to jump right to asking for what I need. "Hey God, here's my laundry list today..." But the psalmist properly acknowledges God, starting by honoring God's name, the same thing we do every Sunday when we pray, "Hallowed be thy name."

There's power in speaking someone's name, isn't there? There's a big difference between "Hey Kory" and "Hey you." But for a long time, the Israelites didn't know God's name, until Moses had the audacity at the burning bush to ask for God's name, and God had the grace to give it. "I am who I am," God said to Moses. Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God, means "I am," or more accurately, "I will be." God tells Moses, "I will be who I will be," and that's all you really need to know about God, that God will continue to be for us who God has been for us.

There are about as many reasons to praise God as there are trees on the trail to Hanson's Point, but for the psalmist chooses two: God's creation of the heavens and earth and God's ability to work through the most vulnerable among us. "You have set your glory in the heavens." I remember walking out of a UK football game one Saturday evening with my friend John, and as we were going down the ramp, we had the most perfect view of an absolutely majestic sunset.

All the colors and brilliance and radiance our little brains could take in. And John just exhaled and smiled and said, “God is showing off!”

That’s what I think whenever I look at the sky. Or bird. Or a baby. God is showing off all around us, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, including through the supposed babbling of infants. “Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the foe and the avenger.” The Message translate these verses this way: “Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble.” From the expansive heavens above us to the seemingly meaningless gurgles of the little ones at our feet, God is showing off.

Which can make us puny humans feel a little...insecure, insignificant. “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?” In other words, “Us? You care for us? You made Jupiter and you still are concerned about 1882 Bellefonte Drive?” So many ancient religions talk about the gods creating humanity and then withdrawing, leaving us to our own devices, not paying attention to whatever mess we’re creating. But not Yahweh, who is as mindful as Yahweh is majestic. Why? Because God was really showing off when God made us.

Have you heard of Muggsy Bogues? If you have, your knees probably creak when you stand up. Bogues was a professional basketball player in the late 80s and early 90s. He was a stellar athlete, not only dishing out assists and scoring points, but even blocking shots, including once blocking the shot of seven-foot-tall Patrick Ewing. Why is that impressive? Because Muggsy Bogues was five-foot-three. If he stood behind this pulpit, you wouldn’t be able to see the top of his head. And yet, not only was he a stellar basketball player, he could dunk. That’s us humans, the Muggsy Bogues of God’s creative repertoire. So small, and yet we have such power and potential.

“Yet you have made them a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor.” Think God’s regretting the decision at all? This verse echoes the Genesis reading, when God created humankind in God’s own image. That meaning of that has been hotly contested down through the centuries. What does it mean to be made in God’s image? It sure doesn’t mean physically, since we all look so different and God’s existence is way beyond a human body. According to the psalmist, it means that we were made just a little lower than God, imbued with many of the same powers and responsibility and authority that God has. We have the power to create and love and judge, just like God. We embody God’s name in this world. We have God’s work to do.

Did you know there are three parts to a magic trick? Almost every trick features the pledge, when you show something ordinary, like a playing card. Next comes the turn, when you do something extraordinary like put that card in the middle of a deck the shuffle the deck. And finally, there’s the prestige, which is the surprising final reveal, when you pluck that card from the middle of the deck and show it to the astounded audience.

The psalmist makes the pledge – why are you mindful of ordinary us? Then, he takes us on the turn – and yet, you made us extraordinary, a little lower than God. And finally, comes the prestige, the surprising revelation. “You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.” Do you see what the psalmist did there? He started the psalm by pulling back to praise God for God’s incredible creation, then zoomed in to remark on us lowly humans, and then said, “Hey, lowly humans? You know that incredible creation? You’re in

charge of it. You have responsibility for it, from the sheep and oxen to the robins and wrens to the marlins and mako sharks. All of it. God's put you in charge."

That's what it says, but that's not always what we've heard. No, unfortunately, what we've heard is, "Hey, humans, you're basically God, so do whatever you want – to yourselves, to each other, to creation." We've translated "dominion" as "dominate," rather than honoring the original meaning of the Hebrew word, which literally means to rule or govern on behalf of another. Think of the work a general manager does for an owner. They can't do whatever they want; they have to honor the wishes of the one who hired them and put them in their role. God owns it, we manage it.

So, how are we doing as managers? Author Timothy Diebel writes, "We have cut and we have dug; we have extracted and we have infused; we have mined and we have radiated; we have leached and we have polluted; we have incinerated and we have killed to the point of extinction, all has we have precisely seen fit, leaving us frighteningly little creation over which to exercise the dominion we have been given."

You see what we've doing? We're taking God's name in vain. We have been given the power to speak God's name into this world in the way we treat each other and honor the image of God in each other and care for the creation over which God has given us authority. We've spraypainted graffiti over the divine image, marring the world around us, tearing at the fabric that holds us together as the pinnacle of God's creation.

I was thinking about all this as I sat at Hanson's Point, looking out at this wild, undeveloped part of our beautiful state. Does our sense of ownership know no bounds? Does our claim to entitled consumerism have any limits? How long before, along with Half Moon Arch and Pinch 'Em Tight Point, I will also be able to see a Starbucks and a Dollar General Store? The psalm calls us to balance how small we are with our place in creation as a little lower than God, as God's general manager. Too often we forget that, while we may feel big and powerful and mighty, we are small.

The last line of the psalm repeats the first: "O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth." It's not just a callback or a bookend; it's a reminder, a reminder that God's name is meant to be majestic, to be hallowed, to be revered. And we bear that name. God is revealed in a lot of ways in our world, but one of the primary ways God is revealed is through us. We have the awesome power of mediating God's presence, and how we choose to do so impacts how others know God. Are we honoring God's name? Or smearing it? When people look at us, what characteristics of God do they see?

"O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth." At the beginning of the psalm, our praise began by affirming the magnificence of the creator. At the end, we stand in awe at the unexpected grace that has elevated us, God's human creation, to unimaginable heights of glory, honor, and responsibility. Because we share God's image, we are also called to share God's loving care for all God has made. When's the last time you let yourself be awed by the majesty of God's creation, as viewed on a hike or in a field or looking up at the night sky? Maybe it's time to be reminded how small we are and how big God is.