

Psalm 8

1. *O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the world!*
2. *Your majesty above the heavens is praised out of the mouths of babes at the breast.*
3. *You have founded a stronghold against your foes, that you might still the enemy and the avenger.*
4. *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have ordained,*
5. *What is man, that you should be mindful of him; the son of man, that you should seek him out?*
6. *You have made him little lower than the angels and crown him with glory and honour.*
7. *You have given him dominion over the works of your hands and put all things under his feet.*
8. *All sheep and oxen, even the wild beasts of the field,*
9. *The birds of the air, the fish of the sea and whatsoever moves in the paths of the sea.*

O Lord our governor,
how glorious is your name in all the world!

This hymn belongs to the evening service of the temple, when the night sky was visible above the open courts of the building.

The first two verses praise the glory of God. Here a name is more than simply a title. It contains the nature and character of the person. God is characterised by his **glory**, which means his presence and authority in creation. God's presence fills the whole earth, and is the object of Israel's praise. So the stars in the sky and children on earth proclaim God's glory.

Vv. 3-8 describe how contemplation of the night sky make human beings aware of their humanity. They seem too insignificant to merit the attention or loving care of God, who made all the stars and planets with his fingers.

But in spite of being on earth and small, human beings have a crown of kingly authority and dignity, which place them just below the level of God himself. This image of a crown can be seen in the hymn Love divine:

*Changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.*

This mastery over the world in which human beings live is the 'image of God' , which we find in Genesis 1,27:

' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.'

But human beings do not own it. The crown of dignity and dominion are a gift of God the Creator.

The hymn ends with the refrain, because thinking of the dignity of human beings leads not to pride, but to further praise of the majestic nature of God.

This comes sharply into focus when we think of the technological advances and progress in medicine in recent years. It points to all these advances as gifts of God, and also to our responsibility to one another in the world which God created.

Further, this responsibility extends to care for the environment, and the sort of world which we should leave to future generations.

It's all summed up in Eucharistic Prayer D;
'Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that comes from heaven.'

Prayer

Lord of the universe, we praise you for your creation:

for the wonder of space,

the beauty of the world,

and the value of the earth's resources.

Keep us from spoiling these gifts of yours by our selfishness,

and help us to use them for the good of all, to the glory of your name.

Amen.