

Silent Reflections

19th March 2024

What is man that you are mindful of him?

Still yourself and read through Psalm 8 slowly at least a couple of times. The translation used here does not use inclusive language, so read it as printed the first time and read it with the gender changed the second time.

Psalm 8

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honour.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!



Many of us have a love of the work of Malcom Guite. His most-recent collection of poetry is *David's Crown*. This is an astonishing work with a poem providing a reflection on each psalm. Every one of the 150 poems consists of five three-line verses, headed by the Latin title of the psalm. As if that isn't challenge enough, the first line of each poem is the last line of the previous one so that the collection forms a circle, hence *David's Crown*. Here is Psalm 8:

VIII Domine, Dominus noster

Before the splendour of the resurrection
Dawns and transforms the world, I'll watch the lights
Of heaven, each a glory in their station,

Harbingers of heaven, keeping nights
Of watch with us, the moving moon and stars,
His handiwork in which he still delights.

And I will listen too: open my ears
To every creature that still speaks his name,
From babes and sucklings to those crowned with years,

For wisdom lives in both. The flame
Of love is kindled round the world in old
And young. I'll seek him too beyond the tame

Familiar world, out in the wide and wild,
As much in the steep seas, and mountain heights
As in the startling wisdom of a child.

Malcolm Guite

For reflection:

1. As you read through the psalm was there a word or phrase that particularly spoke to you? What difference was there when you changed the gender in the text. Talk to God about that.
2. The psalmist responds to the beauty seen in the stars and moon by asking the profound question “What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?”. The psalm ends by acknowledging that humanity has been given dominion over creation. We are not making a good job of that. Take some time to reflect on your response to this.
3. Do you have a special place where you tend to feel close to God? If so, imagine you are there now. What do you want to say to God?
4. Perhaps you have been lucky enough to be out on a clear evening and have seen the night sky in all its glory. Perhaps you have walked through woods on a spring morning and have been overwhelmed by birdsong and the beauty of the flowers. Do occasions such as this make you feel that creation is giving glory to God?