

The Festival of the Holy Trinity
May 21-22, 2016
Psalm 8:1, 9

“How Majestic Is Your Name!”

Majestic – that’s the word David’s psalm begins and ends with: **“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”** Everything else that is between these opening and closing verses of Psalm 8 describes why the Lord’s name is majestic. It is that name of the Lord that we lift up today on this first Sunday after Pentecost, a day set aside to give special honor to the Triune name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On this Holy Trinity Sunday, let us spend a few minutes to consider well what David has written here about God thousands of years ago, and is still so very appropriate for our own lives today: **“How Majestic Is Your Name.”** That is the theme for today’s message. May the Lord’s rich and abundant blessing rest upon the preaching, the hearing, and the living of his Word for Jesus’ sake.

The name of God is important, just as we consider our own names to be important. The Second Commandment speaks to just how important this is to God as He tells us: **“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain”** (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11). Names are special – to God and to us. We don’t want people mocking our names and neither does God. Instead of using his name to “curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive,” God wants us to “call upon it [his name] in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks” (Luther’s Explanation of the Second Commandment). So the question before us on this Holy Trinity Sunday is this: is God’s name used in our lives in such a way that it is majestic or just sort of meh?h?

Majestic: it’s an adjective, which means it describes a person or thing. But what exactly do we mean when we say God’s name is “majestic?” The meaning of the original Hebrew word here depends on what is being described, whether it is a thing or a person. If it is a thing, a physical object, that word majestic implies strength and power. Scripture uses this when describing the waves of the ocean: they are majestic because they are strong and powerful ((Psalm 42:7; 65:7, 88:7; 89:9). They have the power to destroy things – ships, coastlines and cities, as well as human lives. Don’t we stand in awe at the raw power of the ocean? It is an awesome and terrible thing. Scripture also uses the word majestic when describing trees (Ezekiel 31:4, 5, 8, 9, 14). They, too, are majestic because they have the ability to stand even in the midst of gale force winds. I remember visiting the California redwoods with my family some years ago, and just being in awe at the massive size and age of these trees and all of the history over thousands of years that they have seen. Majestic things have strength: power to smash and destroy like ocean waves and power to stand tall like forest trees.

There is another meaning to this word “majestic” here in Psalm 8, one that is different from what I just described when referring to things. When this word is used to describe people, it is referring to those who lead, specifically royalty and rulers. Like waves of the ocean and trees of the forest, they are strong and powerful. Such leaders demonstrate strength in humility and integrity when serving with a heart of compassion. Such leaders show forth power and strength as they destroy the enemies who threaten their people. Such leaders stand firm in truth and conviction when others crumble and compromise (<https://justathoughtdevotionals.com/2011/06/08/psalm-8-majestic>). Such leaders are majestic.

Do you see the connection now between what David wrote long ago and the Triune God whom we worship? God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is majestic, showing forth power and strength. God the Father is Creator, as shown here in the chancel by the upper panel above the altar depicting the Father’s hand of blessing, which has brought all things into existence. This is what all of those verses in Psalm 8 celebrate: the marvelous creating hand of God! God the Son is Redeemer, as shown here in the chancel by the cross suspended above the altar, by which we have been redeemed, purchased from sin, death, and destruction

“not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18), who gave his life on the cross for our salvation. In so doing, the Lord’s power and strength have destroyed the enemies who threatened his people. God the Holy Spirit is Sanctifier, as shown here in the chancel by the lower panel above the altar with the coming of the Spirit’s fire and power at Pentecost. That same Spirit poured out upon those first disciples at Pentecost is now poured out on us in holy Baptism: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in his presence (Isaiah 11:2). This is the One who calls us and keeps us in this one true faith, always drawing us to Jesus, God the Son, who alone is able to present us to God the Father. How can we help but say with David: **“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”** Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier: how majestic is your name in all the earth!

David’s psalm celebrates the incredible beauty and complexity of the heavens and the earth all around us, but it doesn’t stop there. David’s psalm also celebrates man who is **“a little lower than the heavenly beings”** and who is **“crowned with glory and honor”** (Psalm 8:5), who has been given authority and dominion over all creation, but it doesn’t stop there. If David’s words only called us to rejoice in the glory of creation and of mankind, but not point us to the God of all creation, that would be a great injustice indeed. These things are not an end in themselves, but serve to glorify the One who made them. The whole reason for David’s psalm is to move us from the glory and beauty of what God has made to the glory and beauty of the Lord God himself. Recently, I visited a member in her home who is battling cancer. The day was much like this: overcast, dark, and rainy. As I was leaving, standing on the front step, I commented on how soggy and dreary our weather was, and this individual said: “But look at the beautiful raindrops in the nandina bush here.” And she was right. She was what I did not: the beauty of what the Lord created. So when it finally stops raining and we are able to sit outside on a clear summer night watching the stars, let us rejoice and give thanks to the God who made them all. Or when we travel over the coming months to the ocean or the mountains or wherever we may go, taking in the wonder and splendor of the world God has made, let us turn our hearts and minds to the wonder and splendor of God himself.

On this Holy Trinity Sunday, on every Sunday and every day, we join David in saying: **“O Lord, our Lord [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit], how majestic is your name in all the earth!”** Amen.