

Streetsville United Church

Sunday, June 16, 2019

Rev. John Tapscott

“GOD IS MINDFUL”

Psalm 8:3,4

If you have the opportunity this summer, look up at the sky on a clear night, especially if you're in the countryside. I try to do it at least once each summer. It really is amazing. You see an uncountable number of bright stars from one horizon to another. The full moon appears so bright and large. It seems you could almost reach out and touch it, even though it's 400,000 kilometers away. And the stars are much further away than that, so far away, that their light takes hundreds or thousands of years to reach us. The night sky is fascinating. As someone has said, it was not a child but an astronomer who wrote, “Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are?”

The writer of Psalm 8 was King David. As a young man he looked after his father's sheep in the Judean wilderness. After the sheep were resting securely for the night, David would lie down on his back and look at this brilliant scene in the sky. And after many nights of star gazing, he was moved to write these words. “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 babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger!” (Psalm 8:1,2) David was certainly sensitive to God's revelation of himself through his creation. His words here remind us of the hymn “How Great Thou Art.” “I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power throughout the universe proclaimed!” David is also saying that the very act of praising God, which we do every Sabbath with believers everywhere, is a bulwark, an act of resistance against the power of evil. So worship is most important, wouldn't you say?

David goes on, “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?” (Vss. 3,4) Now you might think that gazing upon the greatness of God's creation would make David feel very small and unimportant. Perhaps it did at first. But then David had another insight. Rather than being small and insignificant, David saw that we humans are the crown jewel of God's creation. David writes, “Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.” (vs. 5) Our greatness comes not because we exalt ourselves. Our greatness comes because of God's special care for us. God bestows it upon us. God is mindful his whole creation but David perceived that God cares for humans uniquely above all else. “You are mindful of them.”

What does it mean to be mindful? Well it certainly means to remember, but it goes beyond just remembering. To be mindful means to keep someone or something at the forefront of your thoughts and actions. It means to pay special attention to a person or an object. It literally means to fill your mind with thoughts about someone or something beyond yourself. So it is with God

and the human race. God is mindful of us. I want us to think today about all the ways God is mindful of us.

For one thing, God has given us a wonderful creation to provide for our needs. David hints at God's provision in nature when he speaks of the sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea. (Vss. 6, 7) In the creation story in Genesis, God created humans last. And that's not just because we are the crowning glory of his creation. It was so God could first put in place all that is needed for sustaining human life. As someone pointed out the Biblical story of creation makes sense. Now it might have taken much longer than 6 of our days. But from a logical point of view this is exactly how it would be done. This is the sequence. Everything would be put in place first for our appearance. We are often concerned about the shortages of this resource or that. But really this creation is filled with an abundance for our needs, if not our greed. In Genesis God promises, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will not cease." Everyday God's marvelous creation gives us reason to rejoice in God's provision.

And because God is mindful of us he has given us a great responsibility on this earth. God has crowned us with glory and honour, but for what purpose? It is to take care of God's creation as his representatives, his stewards on earth. Yes, God has given us dominion over the works of his hands. (vs. 6) But that means we are to treat God's creation with respect, to use it but not abuse it; to take what we need without wasting or hoarding. God has put all things under our feet, but not to trample what he has given. We are to be mindful of the earth and of its creatures and also of the coming generations who will inherit the earth we leave to them.

Furthermore, because God is mindful of us, he gives us help for living in this world. He has not left us to find our own way. He gives us his truth and guidance in Scripture. As the Psalmist says about God's word, "Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Plus, God gives us his own Spirit to dwell with us and within us, to give us strength and comfort along the way, and to lead us into God's truth.

God is so mindful of us that he has provided for more than our physical needs. He has provided for our spiritual needs too. He has provided for this life and for eternal life. Here's how the older versions of the Bible put verse 4 of Psalm 8. "What is man that you care for him, and the son of man that you visitest him?" There is great insight in that old translation. God did visit us in human flesh. He crowned us with glory and honour, but we sinned and separated ourselves from God. The whole creation was scarred by human disobedience. Creation groans just as we do. Yet God did not discard the people whom he created in love. God cares for us so much that God himself took on our flesh and lived our life. God visited the human race in Jesus Christ, who is both Son of Man and Son of God. God came in Christ to redeem us through his sinless life, his atoning death for our sins and his resurrection victory. God came to lift us up into a new relationship with himself, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, cleansed by the precious blood of the Saviour. He came in Jesus to restore our glory and honour. And through Jesus Christ crucified and risen, God has prepared a heavenly home for us in the realm beyond the stars, beyond our sight, the realm of eternity. Scripture tells us, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." "For God so loved

the world that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus’ earthly ministry shows us that God is mindful of each person. So often Jesus would stop his journey and attend to the needs of one soul who cried out to him. God is mindful of us and our personal circumstances. God is mindful of you. You can pray about even the smallest concern, knowing that God hears, and trusting that he is working in your situation for good. God knows our needs. He suffers with us and for us. He rejoices in our victories and accomplishments. God cares deeply for each one of us. “He paints the lilies of the field; perfumes each lily bell. If God so loves the little things, I know he loves me well.”

A daughter who introduced her mother to the Internet. She went to the popular Web site, “Ask.com.” She told her mother it could answer any of her questions. Her mother looked skeptical. “It’s *true*, Mom,” the daughter said. “Think of something to ask it, and it will have the answer.” They sat there for a few moments, and then her mother responded in a serious voice, “Okay, how is Aunt Helen feeling?” Ask.com doesn’t know how Aunt Helen is feeling, but God does. God is mindful of Aunt Helen. God is mindful of you and me. “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” God is mindful of us in so many ways.

But now we must ask, “Are we mindful of God?” Are we filling our minds with thoughts of God? Are we seeking his truth? Are we trusting him? Do we recognize our place in God’s creation?

I must be mindful of the speed limits when I am driving. I can easily exceed them if I’m not paying attention to the signs. Those fools who drive 200 km/hr on the QEW are not mindful of the speed limits. They’re not mindful of other motorists who they could gravely harm by their recklessness. They’re not even mindful of themselves and their own safety. Disaster often results.

Humans have not always been mindful of God. We have not always lived under his direction and guidance. Humanity’s biggest problem has been to make ourselves equal to God, or even to take his place. We try to do things on our own, apart from God, and the result is disastrous.

Now thankfully, God has given us signposts along the way to keep us mindful of him. They really do help if we pay attention to them. God has given us the inner voice of conscience and the witness of the Holy Spirit. He has given us Holy Scripture. Above all, he has given us Jesus Christ and the sacrament of Holy Communion. As he broke bread and lifted the cup Jesus said, “Whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me.”

In Jesus Christ, God reversed the effects of the fall and saved us from eternal separation. Through Christ he brings us the hope and promise of eternal life, and the renewal of the whole creation when Christ returns. But also in Christ he gives us a model of what it means to be mindful of God. Paul says about Jesus, “though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him...”

David writes with great spiritual insight - "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour..." God is mindful of us, therefore let us be mindful of him.