

We conclude our six-week series in Psalms titled Answering God. We have learned that the Psalms provide us the words and prayers to help us walk through all kinds of circumstances that life brings.

A couple of weeks ago, I made a trip to Colorado to help my sisters settle my dad's affairs after his passing. I didn't want to travel, but it was an essential trip. After going back and forth, I decided to fly into Denver instead of drive. I was really deliberate in my preparations and care. A friend at CPC gave me a super-duper N95 mask. I wore my glasses. I had wipes and bought no food. I carried my bag on with me, and I reserved my seat early. On my flight over and back, we had maybe 30 people on board, so both ways I had a window seat and my own aisle. My daughter told me to wear a hoodie to keep even more insulated. I must have looked like the old FBI pictures of the Unabomber as I curled up and cocooned in my seat. When I arrived in Denver, I wiped down my rental car from top to bottom. And when I arrived at my sister's house, she made me strip down in the garage and left me a bed sheet to wear as I entered her home and made a beeline to a shower. The world is so complicated and heavy right now.

As we went through my mom and dad's house, I was reminded how my parents saved everything. We found checkbook stubs dated back to the 1960s. But my mom also saved a lot of school-work and memories of our childhood. One of my sisters stumbled onto an art project my mom had saved that dated back to my Kindergarten days. It is an art project I did for Father's Day.

It shows the small, protected, and narrow world of a Kindergartener. Our assignment was to draw a picture and describe what our dad's do for us. Kind of asking the questions: Who am I? And why do I matter to you? I had a pretty small, protected, narrow, and safe little world with my hot wheels, Lincoln Logs, and a tricycle.

I think before COVID-19, we tended to live in a smaller, more protected, narrow, and safer kindergarten world. But our study in Psalms acknowledges that our world is not a kindergarten world. For sure, this COVID-19 virus has shattered our kindergarten world. These Psalms are honest expressions about our world. Dark things happen in our world. Many things happen that don't make sense. A world where our Heavenly Father seems to allow things that we don't understand and not stop things he could prevent, a world where it looks like the bad guys are winning, a

world where unthinkable things happen, a world much different from my kindergarten world.

In this study of Psalms and during this COVID-19 crisis, we have formed words and answers to help us in this bigger world.

We have learned to answer God with trust.

We have learned to answer God with thanksgiving and gratitude.

We have learned to answer God with words of resolve to persevere even if we are walking on a difficult path.

We have learned to answer God through repentance for our own sins.

We have learned to answer God by acting wisely as we apply the wisdom of the Psalms.

And now we conclude in a beautiful place. We are going to celebrate some stellar attributes of God that bring us hope, no matter our circumstances.

The Psalms express answers to every person in their post kindergarten world. Will someone love me in this broken world where all this stuff happens? Is there someone who will restore me? Take away my fears? Rescue me from this distress? Calm my anxiety? Meet my very real economic needs?

What if your heavenly Father were to ask you, "Who am I? Why do I matter to you?" I hope that through this series in Psalms, you are able to write your own "Heavenly Father's Day Card" that will contain layer upon layer of answers that are reasons to celebrate who God is and what he has done.

Turn with me to Psalm 93. *"The Lord reigns, he is robed in majesty; The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure" (v. 1).* Well, this psalmist doesn't bury the lead. He begins suddenly and wonderfully with this proclamation of God's rule. The Lord rules over every other kingdom ruler. The Lord rules over every idol that a person can bow to and over every poser who pretends to be sovereign. It's decisive. It's the strongest use of the Hebrew language. It demands an exclamation point at the end.

He says the Lord is robed in majesty; in fact, it's repeated for greater emphasis. The literal phrase is: "Utterly clothed in majesty, surrounded by, and marked with kingly clothing, it's beautiful. Kind of like the old saying, "The clothing reflects the man."

We also see the attribute of strength. The Lord is no figurehead who lacks authority or power. The Lord isn't wringing his hands and hoping he can fix whatever is wrong.

It says armed with strength. In the original language, it's "He has girded himself with strength." The idea is that he takes a posture for battle, that he is prepared, and wields his strength. He spoke, and our world, our solar system, the universe came into being out of nothing.

It's interesting to me that I have read this Psalm 93 many times, and I have celebrated the Lord as King, the Sovereign One. But I must confess, this verse and the reminder of God's sovereignty over all mean more to me these days. As the great preacher Charles Spurgeon said, "It's only when we face hardship that His sovereignty becomes conspicuous." It's kind of like we don't pay attention to God or grab tight to the doctrine of God's sovereignty until something big interrupts our life. Like this microscopic virus bringing a discussion of sovereignty to center stage.

We will see in this short five-verse Psalm, double even triple repeats of attributes of the Lord that he wants to become conspicuous to us. The word "majesty" is repeated two times in verse 1. Majesty is a hard idea to define. But it has to do with being adorned with dignity, authority, sovereign power, grandeur, and beauty. The psalmist is saying, "Look at the earthly monarchs you know about. See how they arrange everything around them so they would appear majestic to their subjects." But the Lord is the ultimate monarch.

As an example, to drive home his point, the psalmist says, "*Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity*" (v. 2). Earthly thrones, whether they are over companies, religious institutions, or governments, are temporary. They are set up, and they are cast down. They don't instill trust and reliability. But the throne of God and the reign of Christ are eternal and unchangeable. Theologians call this the immutability of God.

A great English theologian wrote,

There was never a time when He was not; there never will come a time when He shall cease to be. God has neither evolved, grown, nor improved. All that He is today, He has ever been, and ever will be.
A.W. Pink

There is great comfort in the unchanging nature of God for us today. His promises are eternal. Isaiah 54:10 spoke to me this week, "*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed.*"

The psalmist assures us that the Lord's throne was formed before the foundation of the world, and it is to endure when all other earthly thrones have long crumbled. And even though the kingdoms of the world may not see it this way, the Lord's

kingdom is not new; it's ancient and eternal - from everlasting to everlasting.

And this doesn't just describe a throne or rule. It describes Him! His life is without a beginning and without an ending. He is eternal in a sense that no one else is. There is never a time when his term is up, and he stops reigning.

So, if you were writing out your Heavenly Father's Day Card, and you wanted to answer the question from God, "Who am I? And why do I matter to you?" Here is a good answer:

Despite The Chaos, The Lord Reigns

I was thinking about God's sovereignty over all events, including my younger daughter, Holly's wedding. The wedding that we were designing had to be scrapped. And a week ago, we did a Covid-19 mini backyard wedding in Roseville. The day before, Holly asked me to say something funny to her just as I began walking her down the aisle. As I was walking her, a very proud dad, passing the computers and tablets zooming in family so they could watch, the only thing I could think of to say to her to make her laugh was an old Yiddish saying. So as I walked her down the aisle, I leaned in and said to her, "People make their plans, and God laughs."

And my daughter, this beautiful young bride who had her life interrupted, looked up at me and said, "Dad, that wasn't funny. That wasn't funny at all." And she was right. It wasn't funny. And you know God's sovereignty is no laughing matter. Yes, it provides us with security that God is in control, but even our talking about it usually means that it is accompanied by harsh realities, disruptions, and hardships. No matter what is going on around us. No matter the constant changing of plans. The Lord Reigns.

I remember thinking, "How does this Psalm connect to Christ?" So, the other night, I did a little research on this passage. I plugged in two words, "clothed" and "majesty." I wanted to see how many verses contained the words clothed and majesty in the same verse. Psalm 104:1 came up. Okay great. Kind of like Psalm 93. But only one other verse came up. It was Zechariah 6:13. It's a prophecy about Jesus. Zechariah reveals the vision God had given him that if the ancient Jewish people turned back to God, then the Messiah, who was both King and Priest, would come to them.

Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two. Zachariah 6:12-13

It's something to consider that every Psalm ultimately points to Jesus the Messiah. And Zechariah expands on the psalmist's

description in his vision. Clothed in majesty is a picture of Jesus, commissioned by his Heavenly Father, to be both the sovereign King, the descendant of David, who rules in majesty from His throne as well as our High Priest who hears our prayers, intercedes for us, and who freely forgives us our sins. As king and priest, Jesus reigns at the right hand of his father and continues to show us love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace for all eternity.

And even today, as we look at our post kindergarten world, we see things that trouble us personally. Many of us are hurting, grieving, afraid, exasperated, and anxious about our future. The psalmist understands our feelings when he says, *"The seas have lifted up, Lord, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves"* (v. 3). The idea is that the seas make a deafening noise; that the sea is something to fear. But then he writes. *"Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea—the Lord on high is mighty"* (v. 4).

We see powerful pictures associating water and fear in scripture. In Genesis 1, God brought order to his creation by bringing order to the chaos of the oceans. But then after the fall, the waters rose again as a judgment from God, and only Noah and his family were preserved in an Ark while the flood destroyed the rest of the world.

We read about Moses, who was protected from drowning by being placed in a basket on the Nile, so God could raise him up to rescue his people. We read about God parting the Red Sea so they could pass through to escape the Egyptians.

There are times when the people of God cry out, and God immediately delivers them, but then there are times when he doesn't appear to deliver us or even answer us immediately.

This COVID-19 thing seems relatable to this. The flood of a pandemic has raised up. The roar of the effects of this pandemic is loud and brings uncertainty and fear. This thing started as a flood; it started slow and then spread. Then it grew, and the whole world took notice, and we ran for our homes for safety. Wave after wave was announced as this flood spread across the world. We paid attention to reports of this rising flood by the hour. But the psalmist says it clearly. If the Lord is mightier than the rising flood, he is mightier than this virus. His ways are higher.

So, where does our hope come from? Our hope comes from the conviction that God can triumph over the rising floods. But our hope also comes when he chooses not to deliver us immediately but instead chooses to come alongside us as we pass through the flood.

In Mark 4, we read:

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly

swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Mark 4: 25-41

So if you want to answer the question from God, "Who am I? And why do I matter to you?" You can answer God this way: Despite rising flood waters, The Lord is mighty to save. He will not abandon us or let us perish. I love these words from Isaiah. *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you"* (Isaiah 43:2).

The Lord will either stop the flood, or he will walk through the flood alongside us. It's His preference. His will. His sovereign choice to make. As the floods make their noise, may we lift up our voices higher in praise and worship as a response to this Psalm.

And finally, verse 5: *"Your statutes, Lord, stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days"* (v. 5). The Lord's statutes, the Lord's laws, are rock solid. His Word, the scriptures, offer us security. What the Lord chooses to do in this world and in our lives is always right. Holiness adorns the House of the Lord. Literally, in Hebrew, "In your house holiness is lovely." The idea of Holiness brings in the idea of beauty.

Beauty is a strong word, full of meaning. We are drawn to things of beauty. We are drawn to the Lord because of his beauty. We are drawn to a better way, a noble cause by beauty. The beauty of God is all over his creation. The beauty of God is all over His people who come together to worship and pray in His house, whether we are literally or remotely meeting together. The beauty of God is found in people living lives that are just, honest, merciful, and kind. When God's people live and worship in this way, holiness adorns the Lord's house. His statutes are good. His Holiness is beautiful. Where truth and holiness prevail, evil cannot prevail.

This Psalm brings out God's sovereignty, his power, and his goodness. All three should bring us hope and comfort these days. As children of God, the Lord is with us. Whatever force of evil you face today, know this: Evil will not win in the end. And this thing that is weighing heavy on you will ultimately be destroyed. It cannot endure against you.

The Lord is sovereign. The Lord is mighty. And the Lord is good. All three should bring us hope and comfort in these days.

So if you want to answer the question from God, "Who am I? And why do I matter to you?" You can answer this way: Despite

the forces of evil, The Lord will triumph. *"Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (Revelations 21:1).*

There will be no sea in the perfected creation in the new heaven and the new earth... no place for evil, chaos, and floods. Everything will become ordered, beautiful, and perfect. In other words, everything will be set right by his statutes and by his holiness and goodness.

It was a strange experience to wade through 52 years of life that my parents had together. And with COVID-19, donation places were closed. We had so many beautiful pieces of furniture and household items that we couldn't take with us or donate. We had cookware, chairs desks, sofa's luggage, great clothes, and so much more. We were really stressing; how could God allow all this good stuff to go to waste and not bless anyone? Why is all this great stuff going to end up in a landfill? We had two days left to clean out the house. It just didn't make sense. We prayed for God to show us what to do.

The next morning a neighbor stopped by and told us that some Chinese missionaries were stranded in the United States. And should I be surprised at what happened next? These missionaries couldn't return to China because of COVID-19, and they needed to set up long term housing in Colorado. They had nothing, and they needed all kinds of stuff. So all these wonderful things for a house, instead of being thrown away, were given away for Kingdom work.

One man was going through my dad's clothes. And he was my dad's size. He grabbed my dad's suits. Then he saw all my dad's ties and asked if he could take some. I said, "Take them all. At my church, we don't wear ties." After they left, I just sat down and thanked God for his sovereignty and goodness to us in a heavy and emotional time.

If you were to write a Heavenly Father's Day Card answering God's question to you, "Who Am I, and why do I matter in your life?" How would you answer God in your post kindergarten, COVID-19 world that you live in right now?

Would you write about the comfort his sovereignty brings to your life when it appears that chaos is winning? Or would you write about his mighty power to lift you and carry you through the rising floods around you? Or would you write about the hope you have because, in the end, the Lord triumphs over evil?

What attributes of God are resonating with you most? How about His attribute of beauty? Or how about His attribute of holiness? Or maybe you would write about his perfect statutes and how his Word has fed you in this season? Or perhaps you would write about his goodness during this time.

This Psalm was written to give us hope. Where do we find hope? We find it in the Lord who reigns and who is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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