

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
December 13, 2015  
Advent 3**

**Psalm 8**

**What is Man**

O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.  
From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise  
because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.  
When I consider 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, the son of man that you care for him?  
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.  
You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.  
O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

“What is Man?” That is a question which captivates many. And it leads those many to come up with many answers. “What is man?” Take your pick: Man comes from animals; man comes from aliens; man is an accident; man is a marvel; man is good; man is evil; man has purpose; man is meaningless.

“What is man?” Through the words of Scripture, that’s a question which God answers for us.

In the midst of Psalm 8, another of these Old Testament Messianic psalms which point us forward to the Savior that would come into the world, we hear that question which captivates so many: “What is man?”

Let’s read that psalm to find that question that we are going to focus on and see the answer which David gives us: **Read Psalm 8.**

“What is man?” As we look to the Bible to answer that question, we really need to look at that question in two similar, yet at the same time, very different ways.

The first way in which we have to look at that question is this: “What is man because of Adam?” That question takes us back to Genesis 1 and 2 and the account of Creation which the Bible declares is the way in which the world started. God formed the world, put it all together, made it all work in six days according to his all-knowing plan by his all-powerful word. And then he took special care to form and give the breath of life to the first man, who in Hebrew is literally called A-dam.

And what was man in this newly created world? According to God’s plan, this man was really supposed to be “Something!” He was the crown of creation, the centerpiece for which everything else was created. He was perfect and holy, made in the image of God. He was to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the animals of the land. He was to care for the Paradise of Perfection which God had given to him. And the earth and everything in it was supposed to serve man’s good...and it was to do so perfectly.

It was that plan for the world, and that purpose for man, which led the psalmist to marvel when he asked the question, "What is man?"

Yet, looking at the world brings a different reality. Looking at our world shows a plan and purpose which were wrecked. By the fall into sin, the peace that ruled in Eden was gone. The dominion that God gave to Adam was diminished. Now man is caught in a battle.

What is man? Because of Adam, we are fighters. We fight against God's will and his way. We fight against one another in a hostile environment where humans are even led to murder one another. We fight against the world which God created for our good. The tiniest viruses can kill us; we battle against weeds and diseases, against pests and animals, against floods and droughts to produce food. We are poisoned by pollution. We are threatened by a whole host of natural disasters.

And as we fight all these battles, we are destined to lose. Because though we have so many ways to make life easier, though we have medicine that keeps us alive in the battle, inevitably, man's final home is the dust of the earth from where he came.

What is man? Because of Adam - the Bible tells us - we are losers.

But do you remember I mentioned there were two ways to look at this question, "What is man?" We can look at what man is because of Adam, but we can also look at what man is because of the Son of Adam, and what a difference that seemingly small change in perspective makes.

In the course of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus refers to himself by a special title 78 times. He calls himself the "Son of Man." Really, what Jesus was calling himself was the "Son of Adam."

Now, "Son of Man" might be a fitting and natural way, as we talked about earlier, to speak about us and the rest of sinful humanity. However, it is a quite unnatural to talk about God

in that way. So, why would Jesus make it such a common practice to stress his humanity and connection to Adam when he was actually the Son of God?

He stressed that humanity because it was so important for restoration. For order to be restored, there was work to be done. But God couldn't depend upon Adam or any of his natural sons—any of us - to do the work. So what did God do? He took his Son, who was with him from eternity; who was there at the Creation of the world; who was himself true God; and he **"made him a little lower than the angels" (Ps 8:7).**

We call this the humiliation of Jesus – Jesus gave up the glory which belonged to him as true God, and he humbled himself. How did that happen? Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels" when he was born of Mary." Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels" when he was hungry; when he cried; when he needed sleep. Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels" when he relied on the angels to guard and help, as was the case after his temptation. But most of all, Jesus was "made a little lower than the angels" when he hung on the cross and felt the pain of being forsaken by God as he died.

Jesus needed to become the "Son of Man" so that he could do what God, or even angels for that matter, could not. As the Son of Man, Jesus could live on this earth under the same burdens of humanity that we do. As the Son of Man, Jesus could die. That is what we needed, so Jesus went to great measure to tell us what he was. Adam had brought sin, pain, and death into the world through his work. Jesus was the Son of Adam who was going to bring forgiveness, joy, and life back to the world.

And our assurance that the plan worked; that Jesus succeeded in his work as the Son of Man; that Jesus changed what man is; is given by what God did for Jesus after he was **"made a little lower than the angels."**

The psalmist says, **"You crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet" (Psalm 8:5-6).**

When Jesus had finished the work of defeating sin, death, and the devil, he ascended into heaven and there he sits at the right hand of God. The one who was willingly made “**a little lower than the angels**” now sits on the highest throne with all power in heaven and earth. He has been crowned with all glory and honor.

And it is because of Jesus the Son of Adam, that we will experience one day what God planned and purposed for Man in Eden. One day, when Jesus returns at his second Advent, he will create a new heaven and new earth. In that eternal home, we will be crowned with the power and authority that was intended for Man in the Garden. The peace of that perfect place will exist once again. And God has given us the promise that what has been established by the Son of Adam cannot be corrupted.

What is Man? Because of Adam, we know the struggles, the pain, the death that define us who live on this corrupted earth. Because of the Son of Adam, we know something entirely different. We know the peace, joy, and life that belong to us now and which waits for us in eternity. Amen.