

Psalm 148
Psalm 148
Colossians 1:1-23

“Maker of Heaven and Earth”

November 28, 2021

What happens when you lose your temper?
You become like an instrument that is out of tune.

Have you ever heard a beginning musician
who doesn't know how to tune the instrument properly?
It can be painful to listen!

In the same way, we also can become “out of tune” –
we lose pitch – we lose our timbre – our temper.

Psalm 148 is all about restoring the temper of all creation!!

You may have heard of the “music of the spheres” –
but what does that mean?

What is the “music” of the heavens?
Psalm 148 says “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!”

What does their praise sound like?

Probably to no one's surprise, astronomers are telling us that all sorts of heavenly bodies
give off various frequencies!
There *actually* is a music of the spheres!!

But music refers to more than just “sound.”
In the sixth century the Christian philosopher, Boethius, describes three kinds of music:
musica mundana (the music of the spheres – the music of the universe)
musica humana (the internal music – or harmony – of the self)
and musica instrumentis (the music that we hear with our ears).

And there are connections between these musics –
for instance, if we are out of harmony with ourselves or others,
we talk about “losing our temper” –
which comes from the word “timbre” or pitch.
To lose your temper is to be “out of tune” with yourself or others – or God!

Many have noticed that the right sort of music can help adjust our attitude
(the evil spirit that afflicted King Saul left when David played the lyre!).
That shouldn't surprise us – because music is part of the physical world.
(Indeed, the mathematical properties of sound waves
led music to be included with mathematics, geometry, and astronomy

in the quadrivium – the four mathematical arts).

Psalm 148 calls all of creation to participate in the praise of the LORD.

And there are two parts to Psalm 148:

Verses 1-6 speak of the heavens and those who dwell there.

Verses 7-14 speak of the earth (and the seas) and those who dwell there.

Sing Psalm 148

Read Colossians 1:1-23

We are working our way through the Apostles' Creed –
noting, as we go, how it relates to the Nicene Creed.

The Apostles' Creed begins:

“I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.”

The Nicene Creed makes only a couple of small additions:

“I believe in *one* God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, *and of all things visible and invisible.*”

The Nicene Creed took shape in the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century,
and so it is not surprising that many of the additions clarify the Trinitarian nature of
Christian faith

When we confess that we believe in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son,
and in the Holy Spirit –

we are not saying that there are three gods.

Rather we are saying that we believe in *one God* who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is rooted in the *shema* – in Deuteronomy 6 –

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God – the LORD is one –
And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

And this *one God* is the one who created the heavens and the earth.

He created all things.

The Nicene Creed also adds another line in the second part (regarding the Son),

“by whom all things were made.”

The early Fathers recognized that there was a danger in the way the Apostles' Creed was worded.

You might wind up thinking that the Father is the Creator,
the Son is the Redeemer,
and the Spirit is the one who is active in the church.

But if you believe in the Holy Trinity,
then you must confess that the Triune God is the maker of heaven and earth.

This is what Paul is getting at in Colossians 1 –
when he says that the Son is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...
All things were created through him and for him.”

Paul cannot imagine a unitarian deity.
The One God who is the maker of heaven and earth
is the Tri-une God.

Last week, I noticed gladly that Rev. Pinegar could not possibly preach a sermon
on “God the Father Almighty” without proclaiming the *Son of God!*
In the same way, I cannot preach on how God is the Creator
without preaching on our Triune Creator –
otherwise I would be bearing false witness!

I’d like to start by showing how Psalm 148 sets up Paul’s teaching in Colossians 1.
Because what Paul is doing in Colossians 1 is showing how the Creator is the Redeemer.
Creation and New Creation are intimately bound together.
And even Paul’s language of “visible and invisible” – which the Creed borrows –
is rooted in Psalm 148.

1. Maker of Heaven and Earth – Psalm 148

a. The Heavens – Visible and Invisible – and the Unchanging Word

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;

praise him in the heights!

² *Praise him, all his angels;*

praise him, all his hosts!

³ *Praise him, sun and moon,*

praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴ *Praise him, you highest heavens,*

and you waters above the heavens!

Psalm 148 starts by calling the heavens to praise the LORD –
and those who dwell in the “heights”.

The angels and the hosts of heaven.

These are the heavenly beings.

We often think of “angels” as a vague group of heavenly beings.

In fact, scripture talks about all sorts of beings –

cherubim, seraphim, powers, principalities, spirits –

even using the term “gods” at times.
Paul calls them “thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.”

Scripture teaches that there are lots of different kinds of ‘angels.’

Some of them have rebelled against God –
and others remained faithful.

But all of these heavenly beings are called to *praise Yahweh*.

These are among the “invisible” things that God made.
I mention this because it is really important that we hold on to this language of “visible and invisible.”

Someone once tried to change the Creed to read,
“maker of all things seen and unseen.”

It might sound at first like a decent translation of “visible and invisible” –
except “seen and unseen” focuses on the capacity of the viewer:

If I turn on the light, then that which is unseen becomes seen.

But visible and invisible has to do with the character of the objects themselves.

The angelic world is invisible.

There is an invisible realm – and it too is called to praise God.

But so also the visible heavens.

How does the sun praise God?

Think of how Psalm 19 puts it:

“The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are their words, whose voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out through all the earth,

and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,

and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.”

The sun, moon, and stars proclaim the handiwork of God.

They praise God by fulfilling the purpose for which he made them!

Genesis 1 tells us that the sun, moon, and stars were given as lights –
but also as *signs*.

“Let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years...” (Gen 1:14)

The movement of the sun signals the change of seasons –
as well as the passing of days and years.

Astrologers have long thought that they could interpret the signs of the heavens.
My objection to astrology is *not* that they think that there are signs in the heavens.
My objection is when they think that they have figured out
the code to interpret the signs!

Heavenly bodies *do* have an effect on the earth!
The moon influences the tides.
Sunspots and solar radiation have all sorts of influence on the earth.

It won't surprise me at all if there is far more going on than we now understand!

When Psalm 148 speaks of the "waters above the heavens" –
it is referring to that big blue dome – the sky!

Why is the sky blue?
(yes, in one sense it has to do with how the light from the sun
gets scattered in the atmosphere –
but that is *how* the sky looks blue – not *why*).

Why is the sky blue?
God made it that way – he made light with these properties –
so that the heavens above and the seas below –
would reflect each other.
He made it this way so that we would look up and see a cosmic ocean.

(it's why we talk about 'space ships' – sailing the cosmic sea).

It's why the rainbow is so important in Genesis 9.
God says that when he sees the rainbow in the clouds
he will remember that he has promised never again to flood the whole earth.

And when we see the rainbow –
we are reminded that the waters above the heavens
will never again be used to destroy the earth!

So far the focus has been on *what* should praise the Lord.
The heavens – and the inhabitants of the heavens!
Verses 5-6 then talk about *why*.

⁵ *Let them praise the name of the LORD!*
For he commanded and they were created.

⁶ *And he established them forever and ever;*
he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.^[a]

They are to praise God because he is their Creator.
He commanded and they were created.

There are two words used in Genesis regarding *how* God made the world.

The word “bara” – which is only used in three verses in Genesis 1:

verse 1 – “in the beginning God *created* the heavens and the earth.”

verse 21 – “God *created* the sea creatures, and every living creature...”

and verse 27 – where *three times* it says that God *created* man in his own image,
in the image of God he *created* him;
male and female he *created* them.

Bara is used particularly for when God speaks something into existence.

The other word – *asah* – is used for forming or making things.

If you think about it,

we are “makers” – we were made in the image of God to “make” things.

But we are not creators.

Who speaks and it comes to pass?

We shape things – we can even shape things with words!

But we cannot speak new things into existence!

We can use words to redefine things!

(Lord knows that we do that all the time!!)

But at the end of the day, the things that God has made are rather stubborn

We can even “remake” ourselves –

but we cannot speak ourselves into being something else.

We can call him Caitlyn, if that’s what he wants –

but after all the words – and after all the surgeries –

Bruce Jenner is still the same man he was before.

We are *not* Creators.

When you look throughout the OT, the term “bara”

is never used for what humans do.

It is used for the original creation – when God made man (and all things).

And it is used for the new creation – the redemption of Israel (and of all humanity).

God alone is the Creator –

He is the Creator of heaven and earth.

He is the Creator of the new heavens and the new earth –

the redeemed humanity.

He is the one who *commanded and they were created*.

And likewise, he is the sustainer.

“He established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.”

In one sense, God *could* destroy the heavens and the earth –

but he has promised not to.
In Genesis 8:22, God said,
“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

He gave a decree – and it shall not pass away.

And God’s faithfulness in the Created Order is at the heart of our confidence
that he will also be faithful in redemption!

In the ancient world, it was common to think that the creator god
might not really care much any more about his creation.

But in the Creed, we confess that the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –
not only made all things – but also has a purpose and plan for salvation.

And that is where part 2 turns:

b. The Earth – All Peoples – and the Salvation of Israel

⁷ *Praise the LORD from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all deeps,*
⁸ *fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy wind fulfilling his word!*
⁹ *Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!*
¹⁰ *Beasts and all livestock,
creeping things and flying birds!*
¹¹ *Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!*
¹² *Young men and maidens together,
old men and children!*

The earth – the seas – and all that is in them.

The “forces of nature” (as we call them)
are in fact obedient to the Word of the LORD.

We need to be careful in our day *not* to give in to a purely “scientific” view of nature.

Don’t get me wrong: science is awfully useful!

The reason *why* we can study nature is because there *is* an order and pattern in nature.

But that order and pattern is there *because nature obeys the voice of the LORD!*

And not just nature – but all peoples are to praise the LORD.

“Kings of the earth and *all* peoples,
princes and *all* rulers of the earth!

Young men and maidens together,

old men and children!”

In the same way that Genesis 1 slowly worked through the six days of creation – before finally reaching the creation of man at the end of the sixth day – so also Psalm 148 moves slowly through the whole of creation, before finally reaching humanity in verses 11-12.

All of this creational imagery has been setting us up for seeing a pattern – a pattern that is unfolded in history.

God’s purposes in creation are directed at all the nations!

And all nations are called to praise the name of the LORD for a reason:

*¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his majesty is above earth and heaven.*

The Name of the LORD – the name of Yahweh – is exalted –
his majesty is above earth and heaven.

Heaven and earth (and all that fills them) were just called to praise the LORD –
because his majesty – and his name – is exalted above earth and heaven.

Why?

*¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near to him.
Praise the LORD!*

All nations will praise the LORD.

The rulers – along with the youths and maidens – the old with the young –
Why?

Because the LORD has brought Israel near to himself.

In Psalm 148 we see that unique salvation of Israel
results in the praise of the nations.

Because only through the salvation of Israel does salvation come *to* the nations.

The uniqueness of Israel results in the coming of Jesus –
the one who is the Second Adam – the Seed of Abraham –
the firstborn son of God – the Son of David – the Suffering Servant –
the true Israel.

And because Jesus is the *one* who has drawn near to God in his ascension to his right hand, therefore he has *brought us near* – so that we might be seated with him in the heavenlies!

2. By Whom All Things Were Made – Creation and New Creation – Colossians 1

This is Paul’s point in Colossians 1 – where Paul says that the Father
“has delivered us from the domain of darkness
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (v14)

One would think that this was simply a point about redemption.
What does this have to do with creation?!

Keep reading:

Paul says in the next verse of the beloved Son
“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities –
all things were created through him and for him.” (v15-16)

What does it mean for the beloved Son of God to be the firstborn of all creation?
Well, again, see it in the light of what comes next:

“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
And he is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that in everything he might be preeminent.”

He is the firstborn of all creation.
He is the firstborn from the dead.

We’ll look more in the coming weeks at what it means for the Son of God to be Begotten.
But at the heart of his being the “firstborn”
is his preeminence in creation – and his preeminence in redemption.
In the ancient world there were many who thought that the creator god had lost interest.

Like someone said to me the other day,
“Sure, I believe something is out there – but it doesn’t seem all that interested in us.”

The central insight of Christianity –
the central *revelation* of God in Jesus Christ –
is summarized nicely in the Heidelberg Catechism,
when it asks:

26. Q. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them, and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence, is, for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father. In Him I trust so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul, and will also turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow. He is able to do so as almighty God, and willing also as a faithful Father.

I have often called attention to the importance of the theme of ‘sonship’ in scripture.

God created Adam as his son.

When Adam failed, God called Israel his firstborn.

When Israel failed, God took the son of David as his son.

The whole history of Israel can be seen as the history of the son of God,
as Paul says in Galatians 3-4.

Israel was the son of God in his minority – “a son is no better than a slave”
but in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, born of a woman,
born under the law.

Jesus fulfills the whole history of the son of God
because he has been the Son of God for all eternity.

In this way we see that God is our Father only for the sake of Christ – the Messiah.

It is only through the resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God,
that we become true children of God.
Our sonship depends upon his sonship.

In his incarnation,

He saw with human eyes the work of his own hand.

He prayed that the glory of the Lord would endure forever

(thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven)

and in his death he brought destruction to the wicked,

and salvation to his people.

And in his resurrection, as he tells us Matthew 28,

“All authority, whether in heaven or on earth, has been given to me.”

This is what Paul speaks of in Ephesians 1:20-23.

Jesus has now been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Father,

“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,

and above every name that is named,

not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet

and gave him as head over all things to the church,

which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

The Creator and Preserver of all things,
has now become the Redeemer.

You see,

all that we have talked about with respect to creation and providence,
must be seen in the light of Christ.

It is your savior who rules and governs all things.

It is the one who died for you and lives and reigns at the right hand of God,
“as head over all things *to the church*,”
who now orders all things according to his purposes.

It is Jesus,

your brother,

who opens his hand to give you your daily bread.

It is your Father who cares for you,

and disciplines you to teach you his ways.

So that we can say with the apostle Paul,

that we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose.

And if God is our Father, then Jesus urges us

*And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink,
nor be worried.*

*For all the nations of the world seek after these things,
and your Father knows that you need them.*

Instead, seek his kingdom,

and these things will be added to you. (Luke 12)

Notice the contrast that Jesus makes between the nations of the world and you.

The word for “nations” is the same word as the word for “Gentiles.”

It is the word “ethne,”

from which we get our word “ethnicity.”

The Gentiles of the world seek after these things.

All the ethnicities of the world seek after these things.

But you are not supposed to be like the Gentiles.

You are not supposed to be like the nations.

And **why** are you supposed to be different?

Because *your Father knows that you need them.*

God is not just some distant ruler who governs all things with abstract rules.

He is your Father.

He knows what you need.

Jesus tells you to seek *his* kingdom,
because it is the kingdom of your Father!
Jesus has established a new kingdom – indeed, a new family –
in which we have no need to be anxious for anything.

God the Father will take care of his children.
And Jesus goes on to say that the reason why you shouldn't be worried about these things
is because *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!*

So you are to be busy seeking first the kingdom of your Father,
and it is his good pleasure to give you that kingdom that you are seeking!

So what are you worried about?

Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.

Do not be greedy and grasping for the things of this world.
They won't last!

We will spend most of Advent in the section of the Creed
about the Virgin birth,
but perhaps a reminder of creation and providence is a good place to start!

Because we are heading into the season of the year
where consumerism rules the hearts of many.

Children,
guard your hearts in the coming weeks.
You will be tempted to be greedy,
and to fix your hearts on the "loot" that will be piling up around the tree.
It is perhaps the most diabolical scheme of man to turn the celebration of the birth of Christ
into a celebration of greed and materialism.

The biggest shopping season of the year is designed to celebrate the birth of the man who said,
Sell your possessions and give to the needy.

It is ludicrous!
Absurd!

If you understand the meaning of Christmas,
then don't just buy a meaningless gift –
love one another!

I know two little boys who were heading off to the mission field with their parents.
They couldn't take all their toys with them.

Their parents were a little concerned that they wouldn't understand.
But their response was to say that if Jesus laid down his life for us,
then certainly they could give away their toys for others.

Could you give away the things that matter most to you?

If your possessions—if your stuff—
is getting in the way of your pursuit of the kingdom of your Father,
then get rid of your stuff.
And thus, *provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old,
with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail,
where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Where is your treasure?
What do you value?

What does it mean to have treasure in the heavens?

It means to remember where your inheritance is coming from.
Your Father in heaven delights to give you the kingdom of his Son.

So if you believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,
then you are to be about the work of your Father's kingdom.