

Messiah Moravian Church
June 12, 2022
Trinity Sunday
Sermon: God's Mindfulness
Dane Perry
Psalm 8

MORNING PRAYER: Our prayer this morning is from St. Francis of Assisi's Cantic of the Sun as adapted by Rick Morley. Let us pray:

O Lord, you are praised by our Brother, Sun, who brings the day, and you give light through him. May light be shed on your Church so that your faithful people bear your likeness.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Sister, Moon, and the stars. In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and beautiful. May the nations of the earth, whom they look down upon each night, be blessed with your peace.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Brothers, Wind and Air, and clouds and storms and all the weather. May you rain down your grace upon our nation and its leaders and people.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Sister, Water. Quench the thirst of the poor, the downtrodden and those who are ill or in trouble of any kind.

You are praised, O Lord, through our Brother, Fire, through whom you brighten the night. We pray you to brighten your kingdom, where the souls of the faithful departed rest. For them, as you, may there be no night.

You are praised, O Lord, through our sister and Mother, Earth, who feeds us and rules us and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs. Give us the will to care for her, as you created her.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you, through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy are those who endure in peace, for you, Most High, will crown them.

O Lord, we praise and bless you, and with all of creation, we serve you and pray to you with great humility. Amen.

SERMON:

GOD'S MINDFULNESS

An adventuresome man crossed the Atlantic on a 50-foot sailboat as a member of a four-person crew sailing from the Caribbean to the Azores. When asked about the best moment of the journey, he said that it occurred half-way across the Atlantic on a calm day. He gathered up his courage and jumped overboard into the sea and floated on his back, gazing up at fluffy clouds billowing overhead. He wanted to know what it would feel like to be a puny speck on the globe, floating there with the vastness of the ocean beneath him, and the wide expanse of sky above him. For a poor swimmer like me, this sounds like sheer madness. And who knows what hungry creatures lurk in those depths!

He also said that it was terrifying in a way but provided an unmatched opportunity to face his fear, to ponder his own insignificance on this vast earth and to be vulnerable to the universe. I wonder if he felt just a little lower than the angels as he floated in the deep dark sea, beneath a never-ending sky.

The world seems to have more ways than ever of making us feel as though we are out in the deep, and one can measure the depths of life in more than just water. Potential depths are in the news every day. Wars, political conflicts, murders and horrific injustices erupt endlessly. Then there are the dramas of our own inner fears, insecurities and bitternesses. Life has many ways to make us feel like a puny speck on the planet.

What are human beings, God, that you are mindful of us?

There has been a lot of talk in recent years about mindfulness and the need to slow down, to cut back on the myriad distractions provided by our devices and screens and to focus on what is really important in life.

Very little good has come from the Covid pandemic. Mostly it has been a sorrowful, disrupting, deadly disaster without an end in sight. However, people on social media and in major newspaper articles have noted that the coronavirus accomplished one thing nothing else has managed to do in recent decades: it slowed us down.

We stayed home together. We learned to be with one another. We have been made mindful, mindful of one another, mindful of what is really important and what is superfluous. Some years ago Time magazine highlighted what it called "The Mindfulness Revolution." But the revolution never really took off because it did not force many people to slow down the way Covid has.

Psalm 8 suggests a better way. It asks us to consider another mindfulness approach that is a way of thinking about God that will enable us to live more peacefully, purposefully and praisefully.

This mindfulness revolution is based in those words of verse 4 that are addressed to God. “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care about them?”

What can it mean, the mindfulness of God? It means that God never gets pre-occupied with the affairs of someone else’s life and forgets about you, that God never drifts off in the middle of a conversation with you and just watches the TV over your shoulder instead. To paraphrase Willie Nelson, we are “always on his mind.”

The mindfulness of God won’t lead to a peaceful, purposeful and praiseful life unless we believe what the Psalmist says next in verse 4. God cares for us. For churchgoers such a familiar idea evokes little more than a bored smile or polite skepticism. From the Deists of the 18th century to current times, people contrast the vastness of our clockwork universe with the feeble humans on this tiny grain of sand and conclude, “God couldn’t care less about us.”

As he tended his sheep, the Psalmist gazed up at the same heavens, the moon and the stars that God set in place, and asked that same question. “Why should you give us a moment’s consideration?” But the Psalmist gives a very different answer from some contemporary skeptics: God does care.

We tiny bits of carbon-based life are to oversee the world responsibly, because, according to the Psalmist, God made us just a little lower than heavenly beings and crowned us with glory and honor. We’re not just floating particles of protoplasm; we’re princesses and princes. “You have given us dominion over the works of your hands.” How much does God care? Out of nothing, he made us to be his royal children. Max Lucado once wrote, “If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.”

But we often do not feel like royal children, do we? We feel more like paupers than princesses or princes. If I’m a child of the king, why is my life so hard? If I’m crowned with glory and honor, why is my life filled with shame and misery? Often it seems as if God has forgotten us.

But our faith tells us that God showed how much he cares about us not only by elevating us to positions of royalty in his world, but even more by lowering himself to the position of servant and criminal. Philippians 2 asserts that “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” That is how mindful God is of us, how much God cares about us.

In the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, absent-minded professor John Nash seems completely distracted on his first date with Alicia, the woman who will become his wife. At a big party in the Governor’s Mansion Alicia comments on the beautiful paintings on the wall and says at one point, “God must

be a painter or else why did he invent every possible color.” Nash seems oblivious and does not respond.

Later in the film Nash shows up late for a birthday dinner. Alicia is annoyed. But then he gives her a gift, a crystal prism that disperses light so she can see the spectrum of colors that make up every possible color. He reminds her of what she said months before at the Governor’s Mansion. “I didn’t think you were listening,” she says. “I was listening” he replies.

Maybe sometimes God does seem remote from our lives. Maybe our prayers seem to bounce right off the ceiling or we seem to be whistling in the dark. But sometimes by the Holy Spirit, God comes to us, helps us, answers us, touches us, and we say “I didn’t think you were listening.” “I was listening,” God replies. “I always listen.”