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Childlike on Palm Sunday - Psalm 8:2

General Introductory Comments - Palm Sunday is not necessarily a "high-church" day like Easter. It is a helpful marker to begin to prepare heart and home for a Resurrection/Easter Sunday celebration. We are not required by Scripture to follow a church-year. But the evangelical and independent-minded reaction to the late-medieval church (where every day became a special "saint-day") is a reaction, not a reformation, and has caused us other problems. Church, the Lord's Day, and the life of God's people has become spiritualized, individualized, and hidden away in a "quiet-time closet" or Christian-ghetto, while the secular calendar of days and seasons fills our schedule instead.

Psalm 8 and Palm Sunday - Psalm 118 and Psalm 8 are both prominent passages in the account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem the Sunday before His crucifixion. As He rode into Jerusalem, they cut down branches from the trees and shouted praises from Psalm 118:25-26.

Overview of the Psalm - The Psalm is about the glory of God's creation and particularly mankind. But that praise has bookends: no one can understand the greatness of man without a fearful wonder of the surpassing majesty of God. "O God, our Lord," must be the start of all anthropology, geology, astronomy, and marine biology. Denial of this truth leads to folly (Rom 1:18-20). If God gives this knowledge (and it must come from Him) then even a baby can know it and proclaim it (v2). A proper study of the vastness and minutiae of God's creation leads us first of all to a crushing humility (vv3-5). But the Queen of all Sciences is Theology wherein we learn not only who God is, but who we are as His vice-regents (vv6-8).

Jesus on Palm Sunday (Matt 21:12-16) - This king was supposed to come in and drive out the Romans. Instead, He comes in and drives out the moneychangers (vv12-13). The theologians were quite distressed over Jesus; He wasn't following their understanding of the Scriptures. The children in the story understand rightly, however, and shout His praises calling Him the "Son of David" (v15). Filled with anger and envy, the experts demand that Jesus stop the noisy blasphemies. Jesus then points out that the children are actually giving the chief priests and scribes a very faithful bible study.

Focusing in on this Quotation (Psalm 8:2) - Let's zero in on this verse quoted by Jesus.

We Have Enemies - There is a desire in our culture to blur the antithesis. But Jesus made clear that He is the only Way and that those who stand against Him are the enemies of God. God has enemies, and as we learn through the scriptures, so do we - and so do our children. But we must also understand that we were enemies of God once ourselves. We are not friends of God because we are better than those who remain enemies. We are friends of God because of God's grace plus nothing else. And the same is true for our children.

The Weapon of Covenant Succession - But what do our children have to do with this? The strength of the Lord is "established" in the sounds coming from the babies and little ones. That is because the sound is evidence of the promise. God is our God and our children's God (Psalm 103:17-18). When we gather, we see weapons being fashioned for the next generation in the training of the next generation (Psalm 127:3-5). These are not weapons like our Islamist enemies raise up, physical bomb-carriers. *These weapons are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds* (2 Cor 10:4-6).

The Sound of Worship - The central work of these children is to join with their parents in making noise. Our noise (our singing, praying, preaching, Amen-ing) is a response from faith, and God willing, a lively, evangelical faith. Their noise is not to be doubted as insincere or without enough knowledge, as though we had it all figured out ourselves. Teach your children that this service of worship is for them too. Teach them to renew their faith with you and these brothers and sisters in Christ by and through and in the grace of God. Teach them that they are God's weapons.

These Children in Our Midst - It is no accident that we bring our children into this service with us. There is nothing more important for a child to learn than the worship of God, both privately and corporately. This gathering is where God renews His covenant with us and His covenant promises are to us and to our children. It is vital that you, covenant children, grow up understanding that you did not show up here by accident. God placed you personally in the home of Christians, has bestowed His favor upon you, and requires you to obey your parents in their instruction to believe upon the Lord Jesus.

Do Not Despise Childlike Faith (Mark 10:13-16) - Jesus made it clear: only children and those who are like little children may enter the kingdom of God. Do not discourage the faith your child professes - do not teach them to doubt their faith - encourage them to stand on the same promises you do.

Make Babies and Stand on the Promises - Even the UN will acknowledge that the global fertility rate is now below the replacement rate. Statistics show that the lowest fertility rates are in developed, previously robust Christian nations. Christians need to take the command of God seriously - "*multiply and fill the earth.*" Of course, just having babies doesn't automatically fill the earth with faithful disciples. But the work of "Dutch Evangelism" needs to be reclaimed as a central strategy in taking the gospel to all nations.

Childlike with the Children - *"They are ready to believe their God; they are not wise, or noble, or anything great in their own esteem, and yet out of their mouths God hath ordained strength, and by their witness he silences the disputers of this world, and all the wisdom of men..."* - Spurgeon. Do we realize the potency of childlike (exuberant, trusting, imaginative, humble) praise? Do we realize the power of a covenant family and a covenant community?

Palm Sunday and Psalm 8 - What do we learn? Our weakness is Christ's strength (2 Cor 12:9). The gospel will prevail and Jesus will reign over all the earth in the victory of His redemption over the enemies of God to the salvation of the world. But this will not come about by our "numbers," not by our plans or strategies or anything that we do so that in the end, the only glory that will be given, will be to God alone.

And this, of course, sets us up for the week of Christ's Passion. We will celebrate Good Friday because on that day, the gospel-work of Christ's death was completed, and on Resurrection/Easter Sunday, the victorious declaration of our justification, of Christ's vindication, and life from the dead, was accomplished. *Hatcher - Palm Sunday, April 1, 2007*