

**THE MESSAGE for Jan 23, 2011****Psalm 8*****Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner!*****The Rev Dr R. K. Miller**

When the Apollo 11 spacecraft was sent to the moon on July 20, 1969, there were many world leaders given the opportunity to engrave a message on a disk about the size of a 50-cent piece. That silicon disc was left on the moon by Neil Armstrong. And it's there to this day. Pope Paul VI, head of the Vatican at that time, sent the words of Psalm 8. Now, whenever we go outside on a clear night and look up at the moon we know that the words of Psalm 8:3 are there and they hold true, "*when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established...*" When we look up we can see those words true to this day. Reflecting the wonder and awe and glory of what God created. And that God put everything in to motion.

YouTube is home to a vast vault of videos that capture the Apollo 11 mission and landing on the moon. It's all there. You can see the landing on the moon and hear the words, "Tranquility Base here: the Eagle has landed!" The image and sound of Neil Armstrong taking that first step onto the surface of the moon with his immortal words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for... mankind." We know the story. It was indeed a memorable moment. I was five-years-old at the time. I don't remember much. I am so glad for YouTube so I can see it and hear it and relive the excitement of it all.

One of the YouTube videos reveals an emotional moment right after landing on the moon, when news anchor Walter Cronkite pauses because of the significance of the moment. He exhales, smiles, takes off his glasses, and simply says, "whew... boy." It's a powerful moment. Years later, Cronkite said that he'd been completely speechless in that moment. It was quite a moment. Check it out on this YouTube video...

(Show <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNUMq9Sq8mc&feature=fvw>.)

Life is filled with memorable moments, moments so profound, moments so full of joy and excitement, that words escape us. For Walter Cronkite all he could say was "whew... boy." For others they shout out with delight. One such phrase is "Winner, Winner Chicken Dinner." I believe my grandmother used to say that all the time. It captures the excitement of a winning moment. Like yelling, "Bingo" or "We have a winner."

Legend has it that this phrase started in Las Vegas years ago, where every casino had a three-piece chicken dinner with a potato and a vegetable for \$1.79. A standard pay off for a bet in those days was \$2. So when you won a bet, you had enough for a chicken dinner. The joy and excitement of the moment was captured in the phrase: "Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner!" (from Wikipedia).

Have you had moments like that? A moment so filled with joy and excitement that you blurt out some phrase. Or are you more like Walter Cronkite and in the moment words just escape you?

Sometimes when I take the dog out late at night and I look up into the clear night sky I have moments like that. Sometimes I just stand there looking up into the sky in awe of it all. At other times I break into song. And if you were in our neighborhood you might hear me singing from the back yard, (sing) *“Then sings my soul, my savior God to me. How great thou art. How great thou art. Then sings my soul, (here I motioned for the congregation to join me in singing... ) my savior God to me. How great thou art. How great thou art...”*

Do you ever just break into song like that. We just did, didn't we? Have you ever stood outside on a clear night and found yourself staring at the moon and it seems to just hang there in all its glory?

Have you looked at the tiny flicker of lights millions of miles away, or clusters of stars and wondered just how far away they really are?

Have you ever just looked up into the heavens and got lost in God's glory and wonder and awe of it all?

Psalm 8 is King David's attempt to capture moments like that for us. As a shepherd boy he had plenty of opportunities to stare into the heavens on a clear night and get lost in the wonder and awe of it all. Can you picture him?

Picture David standing there under the canopy of the night sky, arms raised, head back, eyes wide open, nearly speechless, he utters these words: *“O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.”* Can you picture him? Can you see why he wrote this down?

In this Psalm we discover a few things about God. David says, God likes to finger-paint. David writes -- *“I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established.”* David says that God created everything by drawing it into being – a star here – (boing) a planet there –(boing) a galaxy there (swish). Then he shaped this little planet called earth in his hands. God shaped it with all of its resources to sustain life – land and water. God created animals and plants and then God creates humans. We have God's fingerprints all over us. (singing) *Then sings my soul...* We are God's handiwork. Created a little lower than angels, a little lower than God.

As David considers the vastness of the universe he stands in awe that God would create humans. David ponders, *“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?”*

Is this not the same kind of question we tend to ask from time to time? Don't we also want to know? Have you ever wondered to yourself, “Who am I in the midst of such glory and grandeur?” I sure have.

How many times have you stepped outside on a clear night and looked up at the sky and wondered about your place in the vastness of this universe? Wondering...

How big is the universe?

Will it end?

Who am I in God's plan of creation?

Why am I here?

What's my purpose?

Why has my life taken the course that it has to get me here standing before you today?

These are questions that David asked too. And yet, he seems to know the answers too. Its sort of like "winner, winner chicken dinner" time as we read in verses 4-8. David paints a beautiful picture for us.

David reminds us that we have a special place in God's creation. We are created in the image of God. God continues to mold us and shape us daily. We are kind of like God's play-dough – so to speak. My children love to play with play-dough. Who doesn't like to play with play-dough? You can shape it, mold it and reconfigure it. That's the way we are. We are like play-dough in God's hands.

But get this... God has given us dominion over everything that God created. Each one of us is a minister – each one of us is gifted by God to be ministers of God's grace as stewards – caregivers – managers – workers of the Lord crowned with glory and honor, and given dominion over the works of God's good creation.

So often we read the word "dominion" as *control* or *authority*. I invite you to read it more like *responsibility*. God has given us the responsibility for this planet earth. We are responsible for God's good creation and everything in it. And God is counting on us to live responsible lives. How do we do that? How do we live into these words of Psalm 8?

We begin by living into the reality of who we are and whose we are every day. We are forgiven sinners -- we are winners. Turn to the person sitting near you and say to them. "You are a forgiven sinner." Now turn to one and other and say, "You are a winner." We can say that because we belong to Christ Jesus who won for us a victory on the cross – a victory that we can't even begin to comprehend. We are forgiven sinners. We are winners in Christ.

Each day becomes an opportunity for us to live into the baptismal covenant/promises that God makes with us. Each day is a chance and a promise for us to live as God's chosen winners.

A covenant is different from a contract. A contract is an agreement between two parties and if one fails to keep their part of the agreement the contract is null and void - broken. The other party isn't responsible. But with a covenant between two parties if

one fails to keep their part of the agreement the other party is still responsible. That's the way it is in our baptismal covenant. So often we fail every day in our baptismal covenant with God but God remains faithful to us. God remains responsible to us.

So let me now ask you a few life-changing questions here this morning.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior of your life?

**If so, answer: *I do!***

You have just made publicly affirmed of the faith into which you were baptized that Jesus is Lord and Savior of your life. So let me ask you this...

Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism: to live among God's faithful people, to hear God's word and share in the Lord's Supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth?

**If so answer: *I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.***

How might we do this? Might I suggest -- one day at a time... one person at a time... one moment at a time... counting our blessings one at a time... and sharing those blessings with others...

Consider for just a moment the many and abundant ways that God provides for you. Take a moment and thank God for those blessings right now. Then ask God to guide you to be a blessing to someone else.

Consider this:

If you attend church without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world. Can I have a, wow?

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of the people in the world. Can I have a wow?

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy people. Wow!

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are truly blessed and among the minority of people who can, but don't.

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer God's healing touch to some in need.

(From <http://www.43things.com/entries/view/417512>)

In baptism, God gives us the starting point for how to live our lives the Jesus way. In baptism, God claims us and names us. God gives us a place of responsibility in God's good creation. God gives us a purpose for living as ministers of God's grace. We are all ministers, servants, stewards of God's blessings. God gives us a missional vision to care for the world and the people around us.

That's why our goal is 225 pounds of food stuff by Feb 6 for the LCCM (Lebanon County Christian Ministry). You saw the bags on the way in to worship this morning. We are providing for the needs of others. God has blessed us and we want to be a blessing to others... When that food is delivered to LCCM I hope that those who work there say something like – “winner, winner chicken dinner.” Wouldn't that be awesome?

Now in our house we like to say (and show) our love to one another. We have this little saying. One of us will say, “I love you to the moon and back.” And the other person will say, “I love you to the moon and back.” Well I'm here to tell you today, that Jesus loves you to eternity and back. Wow!

That makes us more than winners. That makes us blessed winners -- daring to live our lives the Jesus way, changing lives for good, sharing God's blessings in word and deed.

You know every Sunday morning when I go to leave the house. My wife usually says something like this to me, “Is your message YouTube worthy?” And I often say something like, “God, I hope so!”

Our words and our deeds reflect our relationship with Christ Jesus. So I ask you, is your message - are your words and your deeds - YouTube worthy? So that as we pray and live by God's grace, God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God, I hope so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.