

# ***Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor***

*December 6, 2020*

## *Lesson 1*

### **God and Human Beings**

#### **Psalm 8:1-9**

A little digging has revealed something interesting about the word in Psalm 8:4 that is translated “human beings” (Common English Bible, New Revised Standard Version) or “man” (King James Version). The Hebrew word is *’ēnôwah*. That word, in turn, is based on the word *’ânash*. So, what is the meaning of *’ânash*? Oops. It means “frail, feeble, desperately wicked, incurable, sick, and woeful.” That’s not a description you are likely to put on your resume, but that is the way the psalmist has depicted you and me.

No wonder the psalmist ponders, “what are human beings that you think about them; what are human beings that you pay attention to them?” (Psalm 8:4) Even so, the psalmist acknowledges that God has turned to just such frail people to handle God’s wide-ranging creation. In light of this biblical insight, how do we believers dare ignore concerns about environmental perils and creation disarray?

This psalm is one of the psalms that is intended to be sung. The heading in the Common English Bible notes that these verses are for use by the “music leader.” (The King James Version says, “to the chief musician.”) Does the Bible you are using say something (just before the first verse) like “according to the Gittith”? Most students of the Bible think that “Gittith” is a kind of harp. Let the music begin!

I was curious to see what sung response *The United Methodist Hymnal* offers when this psalm is read in a responsive reading. There are two suggestions. One is “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above,” a tune that is from the core of European hymnody. The other is “Many and Great, O God,” a song that is from the Native American tradition. (These are hymns 126 and 148.) What a wonderful reminder that God the Creator has given life to varied traditions, multi-cultural expressions, racial diversity, and differing patterns! God has crowned all of us with “glory and grandeur” (Psalm 8:5).

Psalm 8 begins with a praise of God’s name. In biblical times, a name was considered the definition of one’s character. Remember that some names changed when life circumstances changed. The first reference (verse 1, “Lord”) acknowledges the Hebrew name “Yahweh.” The second reference (verse 1, “lord”) is acknowledgment of the kingship and ruling by God. No wonder we praise God!

**Prayer:** As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “How majestic is Your name...”

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