

Text: Psalm 8

Theme: What is man?

Goal: To show God's love to the people, in spite of our weakness; and to show our responsibility as rulers (stewards) over God's creation (ecology).

Dear friends in Christ,

Introd.: "What is man?" is the question raised by the psalmist when he considers all God's creation and God Himself. Man is something very little among all the things in the Universe. - "What is man?" - is the question I raise on this first day of a New Year. What is your answer?

On a water bottle it is written: *"All bodies are over 70% water. We can live for weeks without food, but only a few days without water."*
- Is man water?...

Genesis 2:7 says us: "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground." And Genesis 3:19 says: You will "return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." - Is man dust?... Dust plus water?...

Psalm 144(:3-4) asks: "O Lord, what is man?... Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow."

Job (7:17) questions God saying: "What is man that you make so much of him, that you gave him so much attention, that you examine him every morning. And test him every moment?"

This is the question Psalm 8 raises too: "O Lord, our God... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have placed, **what is man** that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

It is not just an existentialist question, but it is a question about the relationship between God and man. If there is not a good relationship, there is no sense for human life and everything bad can happen. Without a good relationship between man and God, man think that he is the owner of the earth and try to be owner over his fellows; and then we have all wars and fights, because every one wants to be the chief, to dominate and rule over the others. But if we understand our role among our fellows and the relationship God wants to have with us and among us, then we will have a better year this 2012!

I – Man created as the image of God

If we are water plus dust and something more, what distinguishes us from the animals and from the rest of creation? We are not just a physical (material) body. When God created humankind, “he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen 2:7; 1:27). This distinguishes us from all the other creatures and makes us very special before God! We have a body and a soul! Therefore God is “mindful of us and takes care of us”. “He made us a little lower than the heavenly beings (the angels) and crowned us with glory and honor.”

Many people don't recognize this. They “crown themselves with glory and honor”, taking to themselves the glory and honor God gave us. We, as Christians, confess every Sunday: *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.”* And with Luther we confess: *“I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that he has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them...”* And we confess thankfully with the Psalm 139 (:13-15): “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise

you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in a secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.”

As the man lost the divine image when he fell in sin, God restores His image in us through His Son Jesus Christ. He so loved us that He sent His Son, in flesh (dust plus water), as one of us, who lived and suffered as one of us, died on the cross for... and raised again, to show us that life is more than working, eating, drinking... There is an eternal life prepared by God for His children. As we are beginning a New Year, God promises a “New Earth and a New Heaven” for all who believe in Him and accept Jesus as their Savior.

II – Man created to be the ruler over God’s works

But during the time we are still here, God gave us a very important task to carry out: He put the man to be the ruler of His creation, of His works. The Psalmist confesses: “O Lord, Our God, how majestic is your name in all the earth... You made the man ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” The Psalmist is echoing the words of Genesis 1:28, when God created man and woman and “blessed them and said to them: Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”... And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

Are we working as rulers or as owners? Are we taking care of God’s creation? Man is destroying the beautiful creation of God and is not taking care of what God gave us. As Christians, we need to take better care of what is under our responsibility: the water, the flowers,

the soil, the air. Every plastic bottle or can we thrown away on the road or on the grass will pollute the nature and will be there for many, many years. We need to put litter in the litter bin, and try to recycle what is possible, as God's stewards and gardeners.

Conclusion: The Psalmist was amazed as he considered God's works and God's love to man, in spite of our weakness, sin and fragility. This is God's love in Jesus; we are not worthy, but He came and continuously comes with His love. At the beginning of this New Year we can be sure that the same God is with us, reaffirming His promises, taking care of us, and giving us His forgiveness, His love and hope, as He did in the past year.

We conclude with the words of Psalm 103 (13-18; 21-22): “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children- with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.”
- Happy and blessed New Year! Amen.

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