

“Who Cares?”  
 Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:5-12  
 Rev. David Hutchinson  
 Sunday, October 6, 2019

Do you think God cares about you?

For this morning - - let's say God does.

But, if our working hypothesis is - - God cares for us - - how do we know?

Do we have any evidence - - to back up our claim?

One answer - - one piece of evidence - - that God cares - is that God - - visited us.

When we talk about Jesus - - what we say is that God was with us in Jesus.

Emmanuel - - which is one way we refer to Jesus - - means “God with us”

So - - God visited us - - in Jesus.

And the fact that God visited us - - is evidence that God cares.

Now you might dispute the claim - - and give other reasons for the visit.

Maybe God visited us to spy on us.

Maybe God had other motives.

Tourists - - for example - - don't always seem to care - - about the places they visit. / Sometimes people just visit somewhere for - - fun. / People go to a place to wander around - - and eat food - - and sort of - - take advantage of a place.

Miners and hunters and loggers sometimes visit a place - - to see what they can get out of it. / And is leaving a hillside bare of trees - - really caring about it?

You could make a good case that it is not.

So you might argue that - - a person can visit a place - - and not care about it.

And so - - similarly - - God could have visited us in Jesus - - and not cared.

Maybe God visited us - - just for fun - - or to judge us - - or something.

Maybe...

But according to our Psalm reading for today - - from Psalm 8 - - God visited us and was mindful of us - - and cared about us. / In fact - - the word in Hebrew that is translated “visited” is also translated “cared”.

The Hebrew word in the psalm is the SAME!

Visited - - means cared.

And cared - - means visited.

You CAN'T visit a place - - or a person - - and NOT care.

If you don't care - - you haven't visited.

Instead you've done something ELSE - - other than visit.

You think about a word - - for what that might be...

And so God cares for us - - and the evidence is that God visited us.

That's according to Psalm 8.

According to that SAME Psalm 8 - - we are given DOMINION by God.

God gave humans - - dominion - - over creation.

Which means - - we are given the job of CARING for creation.

How do I know?

Well again - - look to Jesus...

And to do that - - look at the reading from Hebrews for this morning.

Hebrews - - in the New Testament - - focuses on Jesus.

And Hebrews says that Jesus - - has DOMINION - - over US.

AND - - if Jesus - - who is the very embodiment of God CARING - - has  
dominion over us - - then OUR dominion - - MUST be about CARING - - too.

Would we want Jesus to treat us - - like we sometimes treat the world?

Hopefully - - dominion is about caring...

To care about - - the world around us....

To care about other people - - and plants - - and animals...

NOT - - to be tourists - - or people who take advantage.

At least that's what the New Testament says - - here in Hebrews.

So God cares about you!

And - - God wants you to CARE - - too!

That's what Psalm 8 and Hebrews suggest.

However - - the word DOMINION - - is not always used that way.

The word "dominate" also comes from the root for "dominion".

And it is pretty clear that humans have not always seemed to care about the world  
around - - or about other people. / What we HAVE done - - at least sometimes - - is to  
pollute - - and over fish a waterway - - and bring animals to the brink of extinction - - as  
the most recent National Geographic reports.

What we HAVE sometimes done - - is enslave other people - - and pay them poor  
wages - - instead of fair wages.

At least sometimes - - some people - - have done that.

And sometimes - - they have backed it up with the idea that we have "dominion".

So what is that about?

Could it be that - - sometimes - - we are not acting - - as God would want?

Is our exercise of dominion - - out of synch with - - Jesus - - and faith?

Have we - - misused this idea of our dominion?

Are we - - doing it wrong?!

While you search your heart for an answer - - let me tell you a story.

Annie is from Malawi in Africa. / I knew Annie and her husband Augustine when I was a student in seminary. Augustine was in the PhD. program and he was one of my tutors.

Augustine is named after the Christian saint from the fourth century:

St. Augustine of Hippo

Probably one of the most famous ancient Christians - - if you have ever taken a religion class - - you've very likely come across St. Augustine - - and his famous book the "Confessions".

Saint Augustine lived in North Africa where Christianity began.

Christianity did not begin in Europe - - or America - - or the Middle East.

Christianity began in Africa.

The Augustine I knew in New York City also came from Africa. / He was from Malawi, a bit further south. / But Africa nonetheless.

However...

Middle and southern Africa had NEVER heard of Christianity - - and had never HEARD of St. Augustine - - until CENTURIES later.

People in middle and southern Africa learned about Christianity - - from missionaries - - who came from North America and Europe.

Several hundred years ago - - my ancestors - - traveled to Africa with fervor - - anxious to spread the gospel to every corner of the known world. / And in so doing - - they collaborated with - - European imperialists - - to help them DOMINATE - - lands and peoples and resources - - from those lands.

And they did it under the banner of dominion.

And then - - several hundred years later - - I their descendant - - sat in a seminary classroom in New York City - - and learned about Christianity - - from an African named Augustine - - from Malawi.

It would be an incredible small world story - - if it were mostly about caring.

If it were about - - visiting each other - - across continents...

Remember what I said about - - visiting and caring...?

The thing is - - that sadly - - Christian history is not all about caring.

And yet - - sometimes there is - - amazing care - - too.

Augustine and Annie were full of things I did not expect.

I expected Augustine to know more facts about Christianity than I did. / After all he was a PhD candidate - - and I was studying for a master's degree. / But what I did not expect - - was the spiritual strength in their eyes. / Annie was someone who you met and almost immediately believed could heal you - - on the spot.

Years later - - I met Annie unexpectedly - - in the library in Pittsburgh.

She was studying in the seminary there, for her degree.

In Pittsburgh - - the city with the most Presbyterian churches in the USA.

Did missionaries from the 1800s ever expect - -

Africans - - to study at Pittsburgh seminary?

Well - - expect it or not - - things happen.

And circumstances - - reverse.

And we who are given dominion - - and also subjects.

Subjects of Jesus.

Jesus - - who cares - - deeply - - for us.

And nations that are visited - - also send visitors.

And HOPEFULLY - - - visiting - - - is about caring.

For the sake of everyone concerned.

Think about how Jesus - - exercised dominion - - according to Hebrews:

He LOWERED himself.

Christ - - according to Hebrews - - was for a little while - - lower than the angels.

And Jesus walked among us - - and suffered on the cross.

Jesus - - dominion - - led him to death.

And Jesus death - - led to life - - for all of us.

The dominion - - of reversal - - and of surprising care.

What does it mean - - for us to take care?

On this World Communion Sunday - - how can we care for this world?

And what might it mean to be united with followers of Jesus around the world?

God visited us - - and God visited this world - - in Jesus.

And that means God - - cares about this world.

And God cares about everyone in it: we the creatures.

We who have dominion - - over this beautiful place - - we are visiting.

Visiting - - until we return to God.