

## Psalm 8, ISAIAH 43:1-4 &amp; 1 PETER 2:1-10

There was an antique buff walking one day down alley behind his house looking for good stuff some neighbors may have put out to through away. He saw one neighbor trying to burn some junk. One item looked like a large ornate book and as he got closer he saw it looked like a Guttenberg Bible. One of the first books printed. He tried to grab it from the flames. He yelled telling his neighbor it was a valuable book. He said he could sell for at least ½ million dollars. His friend stopped him and said the book not worth anything because it was written all over by some guy named Martin Luther. Sometimes we don't know the value of something until know its background, especially whose it was. Normal everyday things become valuable because of whose they were. The pen Abe Lincoln used to write the Gettysburg Address or a pair of Benjamin Franklins bi-focals, or one of Picasso's paint brushes, or a pair of Fred Astair's dancing shoes or Judy Garland's ruby slippers from the Wizard of Oz. They are all valuable because of whose they were.

In sports ordinary sports equipment become valuable because of who owned them, for instance one of Babe Ruth's baseball bats, or the basketball used when Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points in a single game. It could be the Ice skates of Michele Quan, or the football used when Bills win super bowl. Things are valuable because of whose they are. It may sound strange but people are valuable because of whose we are. Our scripture lessons tell us whose we are.

Psalm 8 says that compared to the universe we are tiny, insignificant creatures. But God made us special a little lower than God's self, and in doing that has given us glory and honor. Someone said, "God is so big God can cover the whole world with love, and so small God can curl up inside your heart." For us it is the opposite we are so small and insignificant yet made so special, just below God.

Our Old Testament less from Isaiah 43:1 is said to the people of Israel but I believe it could also be said to each of us; "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." There is value placed on us because of whose we are. We belong to God. The reason God has done this is in Verse 4; "Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you." Over and over again God has said 'I love you.'

In our New Testament lesson, 1 Peter 2:9 it says; "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." A preacher could do sermon on each one of those names, the last one deals with what I am talking about this morning, we are "God's own people". We are like those items I mentioned in the introduction, we have value because of whose we are and we are God's own people.

I know you can't really do this but if I could I would add a phrase into the Biblical story of creation so that it went like this:

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup>the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that the light was good; "And God Danced"

On day 3, Genesis 1:11, "Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. <sup>12</sup>. . . . And God saw that it was good. "And God danced."

On day 5 Genesis 1:20 and following, "And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." <sup>21</sup>So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, . . . . And God saw that it was good. "And God danced."

Finally on day 6, Genesis 1:27, "So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God God created them; male and female God created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them . . . . <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. "And God Danced."

During the children's sermon the children said that one of the times we dance is when we are happy. I believe God was happy at end of creation because God saw everything was good. And therefore God must have danced. That specialness and uniqueness given to us at creation is said again and again. A different way to say it is to remember your label "Made by God".

There are consequences for us because of the value placed by God on us and all persons. First our perspective how we view things is changed. First we must view ourselves as a child of God and therefore we need to treat ourselves as valuable individuals. On the day I was born God danced – WOW!!! I believe that's true not only for me but each of us can say that. On the day I was born God danced. St. Augustine once said, "God loves each of us, as if there were only one of us." So we need to treat others as valuable, because what I say about me, I can also say about you. On the day you were born God danced. You are valuable in God's eyes and you should be valuable in mine as well. Also on the day each individual in Darfur, Iraq, and Tibet was born God danced for them. I need to find a way I can recognize the value God has placed on them. So, our perspective and treatment of ourselves and others needs to reflect the value put on us all by God.

There are also consequences as far as our motivations concerned. What motivates us to do God's will? Are we motivated by trying to get back on God's good side? There was a movie starring Burt Reynolds. At one point in the movie Burt finds himself in the ocean going to drown. He starts to bargain with God to let him make it to shore. At first he promises a lot but as he gets closer to shore the bargain changes. The closer he gets the less he promises until by the time he gets to shore the promises are all gone. Trying get back on God's good side is not the correct motivation for what we do. Another thing which motivates us is duty and obligation. I would guess that each of us has in our background a strong sense of duty and obligation. These are not bad things. Duty and obligation get a lot done but they still are not the best reasons for what we do for God. The best motivation is thanksgiving. God has given me and you great value shown by dancing at our birth. We don't have to prove our worth or whose we are. We don't have to pay back the debt we have to God. We can't. It is like a child can't pay back the debt they owe their parents. Yet parents continue to give freely and sacrificially because of the value we placed on our children. Our ministries, our missions, our stewardship, our worship all should come because of thanksgiving to God in part because God danced when we were born.

There is a story about a man named Muretus. He was a wandering scholar in ancient Rome. He was very learned but also very poor. One day he became ill and was taken to where they care for the poor. They did not know who he was. The doctor's also didn't know he understood scholarly

Latin. Two doctors were walking by talking in that scholarly Latin. One said to the other, "He is a poor creature, no good to anyone, hopeless. It is an unnecessary expense to care for such a worthless one." Muretus, understanding what they had said, answered in their scholarly Latin, "Call no one worthless for whom Christ died."

On the day I was born, on the day you were born, on the day our children were born, our grandchildren were born, our great grandchildren will be born and every individual from now until the end of time is born, God will dance. And may we all grow to be as beautiful as God meant us to be when God first thought of us.

(The children's message was the book "On The Night You Were Born" by Nancy Tillman. I add a page to end the book with the phrase, "And on the day you were born God danced.")