

Well, it is good to be with you tonight. I appreciate you having me. And I want to thank you. First Press has a wonderful history, and you stand as a wonderful encouragement to many of us throughout this country. I've looked here for 20-plus years, and what you guys have done here, just in my own life, benefited an awful lot from your ministry. So I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for the weather, because it's like Michigan here tonight. So it feels like home, and I appreciate that. It makes it a little easier on me. But let me open the word this evening. I'm going to turn open to Psalm 8. And what we're going to do tonight, we're going to tackle this in two ways. I want to think about family worship together. And we're going to do that by first kind of looking at, it's going to feel like, are we really talking about family worship in this first part? But what I want to do is kind of set the theological basis for us and then After you have gotten that dessert, Josh said we're gonna cut a little bit into dessert. That seems like suicide to me. Let's not cut into dessert. Just the time that you're going to get the dessert. And then I wanna talk through some of the practicalities of family worship and think about that together. It's been a great blessing to my family. It's been a great blessing to many of the people that I've had the great privilege of serving. as a pastor for us, so I want to convey that to you. But let's start here. I often think about psalmate. And psalmate, David the psalmist, has a experience that I would say almost probably every single one of us in this room have had at some point or another, where he says this in psalmate, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place. What is man that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him? And yet you've made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You've given him dominion. over the works of your hands, you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea. Our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. David is what probably most of us have experienced at some point, like I said, where you're out on a night works best when you're out in the country and it's one of those nights where there's not a cloud in the sky and your eyes are lifted up and you start seeing all of these stars, right, that are populating the night sky and we've all done this where you try and you number them, probably as a child, you know, you try and number them and you get to a point where you can't number them anymore. And then you have the thought that one of those stars could contain tens of thousands of stars. And then there are stars beyond

that and beyond that and beyond that. And just this infinite expanse. And then your mind goes beyond the stars and you think, if that's true, How much greater must be the God that has put all of these stars in their place and knows them by name? It must be immense. And how great and glorious must this God be? And then you have the thought, like David has, and that God is mindful of me. That's astounding. And that's where David gets to here in Psalm 8. This God that is that great, he's mindful of me. The question is, is why is he mindful of man? People will say, well, it's because God created us. He created us distinct from the rest of creation because he He needed us in some way and so he is mindful of us. Of course, you know that not to be the case. Think about that passage in Exodus 3 where Moses has the encounter with the burning bush. And we have this dramatic scene where he hears a voice from the bush that tells him to take off his feet for he's on holy ground. And Moses is told that you are to go down and you are to set my people free from the land of Egypt. And Moses then inquires of him, well, who do I say has sent me? What is the name? of this God when they ask, what is his name? And God's response to Moses is, he doesn't give him a name that is like the names of all of the other deities. He doesn't give himself a name like all the surrounding pagan nations. He says to him, that divine name, Yahweh, Jehovah, I am who I am. And you and I, we know God principally by his names in his works. And this name, beyond any name, is the name that he conveys that has a very distinct place of all the names that he gives. First, what I want you to notice is that God by nature exists. That's untrue of everything else, everything. Whether we're speaking of that which is animate, like people, to grasshoppers, to birds, to that which is inanimate, like trees, and rocks, and thoughts, and ideas, and light. He alone is. God by nature exists. He's not becoming, He has not become, He simply is, and He always is. Second, notice that he does not compare himself to anything else but himself. He eternally is in himself all that he will be, all that he can be. I am. He is one with himself. He does not mention himself as made up of things or identified by composite parts. He's not put together. He's what

theologians will say, he's simple. Not that he's simplistic, but he's simple. He's God. He's one. He is. Finally, in many ways, it's the most important name of God in the scriptures because it alone is the name that is not derived from effects. It's the only name of his that's not derived from effects. Nothing comes together to form it. Nothing defines it. This is a name that in many ways is beyond thought. It's immeasurable. It's unsearchable. I am who I am. That is, I exist. Theology will say that that is the aseity of God, that God is ase, that he is, he's self-existent. So what does

that have to do with this? Well, it comes down to this. He needed nothing. He's self-existent. Those that

say, well, he needed something to love. He didn't need something to love. The Father has eternally loved the Son and the Father has eternally loved the Spirit and the Son has eternally loved the Spirit and the Father and the Spirit has eternally loved the Son and the Father. He didn't need us to have something to love. He didn't need us, period. He

is. So the question is, is why did he create us? Why is it that he is mindful of man? You think back to Genesis 1 and

2 and he forms Adam from the dust of the ground and as he forms him from the dust of the ground and he crafts him, we're told that he was made in the image of God. And then you have this great scene where God brings all of the animals before Adam, and it seems like he does so for at least two purposes. One is that he has Adam name all of these animals so that he exercises a sense of dominion over them. And so along comes that long-nosed lumbering one, and he says, oh, that's an elephant, or whatever language he's spoken. And there comes the long necked one and he says that one's a giraffe. And he names them all. But he also has him go through all of these animals, name them all so that he gets to the tail end of all of these animals and he realizes there's not one here fit for me. There's one not here fit for me. And so God puts him in a slumber, pulls out a rib from his side, shapes and forms it into Eve, and wakes him up. And he sees her, and in the Hebrew it's something like cowabunga, hubba hubba, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. And God gives him the mandate. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. He creates man in his image and he gives him the mandate to fill the earth, why? So that when God looks upon the earth, that he sees himself, we created in his image, that he sees himself reflected back to himself. That's why we exist. You and

I have the chief place in creation, above trees, above blades of grass, above sparrows, above angels and archangels, because we alone are created in the image of God, so that when he looks upon us, we reflect back to him his goodness, his love, his kindness, his justice, his righteousness and on we could go. We occupy the central place of all of creation. This is why God is mindful of

man. And this is why you exist. This is why your families exist. Often with my children and My wife, Leah, I have two kids, Grayson and Ethan. Grayson is now 18, Ethan is turning 16 in April, and Leah and I have been married for 26 years. We will often talk about that, look, the Lord put us together, and he put us together for a reason. He put us together for the same reason that he made each of us to give him glory. to worship Him. That's why you're here. Say, well, that seems awfully

self-centered of God, that we exist for Him, to worship Him. If I came into the room tonight

and or maybe before you got here and said, look, I'm gonna be dressed in a red tie and tan pants and a blue sports coat, the kind of official attire of a good Presbyterian, and you are all to be dressed exactly like I'm dressed when I come tonight. You would say, I don't think I'm coming to this thing tonight. If I walked in the room and I said, I want all of you to bow as I come into the room, you would say, mm, don't think so. We're leaving. Why? Because I'm

undeserving. It would be inordinate. It would be wrong. But there's nothing more beautiful.

There's nothing more glorious. There's nothing greater than God himself. And so it's not inordinate that

he would say, look, all of creation is to give me worship. It's not inordinate. It's why

you exist. People are searching for significance all over the place. And it's because they don't understand they are created for this purpose. I remember being in a I was in a video game store one day. My wife nannied for a number of years while I was in seminary, so we have a girl that is kind of like an adopted daughter to us. My two kids are adopted too, but she's a non-adopted adopted daughter. But she was turning, I don't know, 13 or something like that and wanted a video game. I knew nothing about video games so I walk into a video game store and I'm gonna play the coy male stereotype and refuse to ask for help and so I'm just listening and listening to the conversations and trying to figure out what's a good game, listening to these people talking. There was a man behind the desk and there was someone that had walked in and the said to the man behind the desk, is this a good game? As he held it up and the man said, oh, that is the best game. He says, I feel like I was put on earth to play that game. People think things like this. You were put here to give him

worship. That's why you exist. That's why every single person exists, to give him worship. So let's think about it. As we think about family and as we think about parenting together, think about this idea of worship together, this is one of the things that just astounds me when I think about it is that God has given us not only this great responsibility, but he's given us this great privilege of being those that get to be key figures in what he is doing in this world. He wants the world filled with his image, reflecting back to him his glory, right? So we're fruitful, we multiply,

we have children, but because of Genesis 3, that's not enough. No, and so it's a similar mandate, right? The Great Commission, what? Go, therefore, and make disciples. Why? So that the image is restored in all of these people, and they're reflecting the glory of God. Right? And he gives you and I

this great privilege of getting to be key actors, if you will,

in this great story of redemptive history where you and I get to play our part in this that lasts for all of eternity. It's amazing. I wonder if you think about that with your kids and with your spouse and with your grandkids and with your roommates that looked at We're actors in the great story, in the best sense of the word, the great story of all of history. The first church I served at was in North Carolina. And I was a family and children and youth pastor there, and I was over all of the children's Sunday school classes, and there was a Sunday I went into the five-year-old Sunday school class. Miss Garwood was teaching that. She was a dear woman in her 70s

at that time that had taught it for 30-plus years. I went in there and just sat to listen to her teach, and she was asking the students, she said, does anybody know the story of Eli and Samuel? A little five-year-old boy raised his hand, Sam was his name, and Sam raised his hand. He goes, I know the story. Miss Garwood said, well, Sam, would you tell us a story of Eli and Samuel? So you know the story where Eli and Samuel are asleep and God will call out to Samuel, Samuel, Samuel, and Samuel will get up and he'll run to Eli thinking Eli has called him. I didn't call you. So Samuel will go back and go back to sleep and they will hear Samuel, Samuel. He'll get up, run to Eli. This happens three times, and then eventually Eli, it clicks, and he realizes that it's God that's calling Samuel. So little Sam tells this story, and he tells it for like 15 or 20 minutes. He does the voices. Samuel, Samuel. And he gets to the end of it, and Miss Garwood says to him, she says, Sam, how do you know this story so well? And he says, well, it's about me. I said, well, no, not exactly, Sam. But in another sense, it is. It's about us giving glory to him, and you and I are actors in this grand story. And in some ways that five year old gripped it and understood it better than we often do as adults. That we're actors in this grand story. You've been put together in this church for this purpose. You've been put together with your spouse for this purpose. You've been given your children for this purpose. To give him glory. To worship him. That's the charge. Well, think about it. Not only are we created that way, and so Paul will say, for example, in Romans 12, right, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to what? To present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. It's worship. Or Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 10, he'll say, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do to the glory of God. Why? You were created for this reason. But you weren't only created for this reason, you were recreated for this reason. So Paul will say in Ephesians 1.12, Christians are those who have been saved to the praise of his glorious grace. created for this reason, recreated

for this reason. But it's not only that, you're not only created for this reason, recreated for this reason, you'll be resurrected unto this reason. What are the saints doing before the throne day in and day out? They're worshiping. This is what you will do for all of eternity, worship. You were created for it, you were recreated for it, you'll be resurrected unto it. It's your life. It's your life. So we think about that, and we'll think about that together, and think about the fact that this is all of our life. All of our life is to be one of worship to God. But that's how I also think about it, It's true that all of life is worship, but there are also, this is how my mind works, but I see at least there are three spheres of worship underneath that all of life of worship. So we have on one end of the spectrum secret worship, what we will often call our daily quiet times or private worship. So we think about this biblically

and you think, of Daniel so unwilling to give up private worship that he would be arrested for it, right? And face imminent death to tend to private prayer each day. Or you think about Noah rising each morning to pray for his children, as we're told, a righteous man. Or you think about Jesus and Mark there telling us that he would rise early in the morning to spend time with his father. The son of God felt like this was necessary. And so he rose early each day.

Or you think about Peter up on the rooftop where he is getting away to spend time in prayer. Or Jesus when he says, when you go into your closet to pray. It's not if, it's when you pray, go into your closet. There's an expectation that you and I, because we are Christians, because we were created for this, recreated for this, we'll be resurrected into this, that we will not only live a life of worship where we say, look, we're gonna present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Okay, good, but here's one of the spheres in which we do it. We do it in private worship.

And if you met a Christian that said, look, I spend no time in reading the Bible, I spend no time in prayer, you would say, hmm, that concerns me. I have some questions for you, right? Because this is who we are. We

love to be with our God. I mean, you just think about worship, you know, so often people will talk about worship and they'll say, well, what is worship? Worship, they say, well, it's giving to God. That's very true. We are giving praise to God. We're giving glory to God. We're giving thanksgiving to God. We're confessing our sins to God. We're confessing our faith to God. We're giving to God. That is very true. Some will say, well, that's true, but it's also that he's giving to us, and that's also true. He's giving to us assurance of our salvation. He's giving to us his love. He's meeting to us his grace.

He is giving to us his love. all kinds of things as we gather in worship. But it's neither giving nor receiving

that is the essence of worship. What is worship? Worship in essence is you and I just communing, being with God. Or better stated, His being with us. It's just dwelling with Him. That's what was lost in the garden. That's a beauty of what is restored in Revelation 21 is where that new Jerusalem city comes down out of heaven and where we are with God and it says he has chosen to make his home with us, dwelling with us. This is the essence of worship. He's getting to be with God. And the Christian wants to be with God. more and more and more. We can't be satiated. And so we seek time in private worship. It's also true, though, if we have that end of the spectrum, we also have the other end of the spectrum, corporate worship, right? Hebrews 10, you are not to forsake the weekly fellowship of the saints. We're to gather together with God's people. It's not enough, despite what people are saying in our day and age. You can't just live the Christian life in private worship. There's no such thing as Lone Ranger Christianity. There's not even such a thing as Lone Ranger and Tanto Christianity. You need the church. You need to be gathered with God's people. where you are being informed by the entire body of Christ. Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, right, where you and I are benefiting from one another. I need you, you need me. We have gifts for one another as we gather and worship. so that when we gather together, that the person with the gift of hospitality is blessing the person that walks through the door. The person with the gift of mercy is coming alongside of the person and encouraging them. The person with the gift of teaching and preaching, like Pastor Neil, is expositing the word. This is all coming together so that we are all being built up into a holy temple unto the Lord so that We are even more and more reflection of Him and giving glory to Him. This is required. It's just part of living the Christian life because we belong to one another. Think about the imagery throughout the scriptures. We are called the flock of Christ in Luke 12, John 10, 1 Peter 5. We're called the bride of Christ, Ephesians 5, Revelation 19, Revelation 21. We're called the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12. We are joined together, he says in Ephesians 2. You think about the church, whether it was the foot of Mount Sinai, whether it was the wandering in the wilderness, whether it was a tabernacle, whether it was a temple, whether it was the synagogues, or whether it is the church and acts. The church, when it comes together, what does it do? What you would expect it to do. It worships. Created for it, recreated for it. We do it in private, we do it corporately. It seems to me, at least, in the last hundred years, the neglected piece is the in-between. And that's the sphere of family worship. There's a great emphasis in evangelicalism upon private worship. There has always been a great emphasis upon corporate worship. It used to be that there was also great emphasis upon family worship. Where you gather together

with those in your home, maybe it's your roommate or your two roommates. Maybe it's your wife or your husband. Maybe it's your wife and your husband and your two kids or your wife and your husband and two kids and Uncle Bob who lives in the attic. Whatever it is, If you're just gathering together to worship. Just a regular consistent time of gathering together to worship. Where you open the word of God, you pray, and you dare to sing. That's it. This used to be the bedrock of the church. My favorite stories from church history is Richard Baxter. He goes to a town in England. He's an old Puritan. And Richard Baxter goes to Kidderminster is the town. He goes to Kidderminster and it was widely known throughout England as the most pagan city in England. And so he goes there as a pastor and he labors there for a couple of decades. And the testimony is that still three decades after he died, you couldn't walk down the streets of Kidderminster and you literally could not pass a house without hearing worship in the evening coming from that house. Why? because they had been converted. And they understood, look, we seek the Lord in private worship, we seek the Lord incorporate worship, but if we are a Christian family, we seek to gather together to worship. Because we want our home, as we want our private lives and as we want our corporate lives, so we want our home life to be centered upon Christ. We want it to be centered upon Christ. And I truly think that we think we're doing it more than we are apart from having something that's regular and consistent that helps us to do that. You say, well, give me a proof text. I can't. So I can make the argument, Deuteronomy 6, that we're to teach these things when we sit down and when we lay down and when we walk by the way and we're to teach these things to our children. Psalm 78, we could go to, we'll go to here in a little bit, that we are to pass these things along to our children. You can go to 1 Peter, that husbands are to wash their wives in the water of the word. The reality is, is there's not something that says you must practice family worship. I don't think that's the case. I just don't think that we're doing, centering our home upon Christ as much as we think we are. We're not discipling our kids. in the scriptures and prayer as much as we think we are. We're not bathing one another in the grace that the Lord has given to us as much as we think we are without something that is regular and consistent. And family worship just provides that. Just provides that opportunity. Where all we're doing is putting ourself and those that we live with in the way of the means of grace. It's just a means of grace. And I want my wife and I want my kids and I want myself more and more in the way of the means of grace because it's how God has chosen to work. It's interesting to me that we would look at a private life and we would say, hmm, if they're



not practicing prayer and reading the scriptures privately, it's suspect. I'd have some questions for them.

If we went to a church, if you walked into a church, or Pastor Josh decided back there that he and the session here were no longer going to preach the word here on Sunday mornings, this was, we're gonna play bingo on Sunday mornings. You know what, it's fun, let's get together and we'll watch a movie clip. You would say, I got real questions. And yet, We can live our life within the family and not be centered upon these things and there's not a question. We think because two Christians living together it's a Christian home. Listen, two bankers living together doesn't make it a bank. It's what goes on in the place. It's the commerce that's happening. What's it centered upon? And I want my home centered upon Christ. You say, well that feels like a weight. It's not a weight. No more a weight than you going before the cross and before your savior at the foot of the cross by his word and prayer in the mornings or by you coming to church week in and week out. It's not a weight. It's a means of grace. It's just a way of helping to foster you and I and our families to grow in Christ. to enjoy Christ, to love Christ more. Talk about that a little more here after we have dessert. Let me just tell you my history with family worship is Leah and I, like I said, been married 26 years. I came to faith in college. We got married in between my junior and senior year of college. And I think I'd never heard of family worship. It just seemed right to me that we would do something together, that we'd read the Bible together, pray together. And I made a royal mess of it, like many husbands. And it was going to be in depth. We were going to be burying our

souls It was going to be laborious and Leah quickly opted out. And rightfully so. We went through seminary, praying sporadically together. Never read the word together. And then that first church called

me in North Carolina. And they called me, and I had a visitation weekend with them, where you're doing your candidacy with them, and I'm sitting down with the search committee, and sitting down with the session, et cetera. And then they had us stay at this family's house, and they had, I don't know, at that time, seven or eight children. And Leah and I were staying in their basement that weekend and from the top of the stairs I heard the husband say, hey Jason, do you and Leah wanna come join us for family worship? Well, it's a candidating weekend, I can't say no. So we went up the stairs and we went into their family room and they were sitting there And the older kids had the younger kids sitting on their lap, and they read the Bible, they prayed, they sang a hymn, and it took all of 12 minutes? And I remember Leah and I walking down the stairs, and we both looked at each other and we went, it can be that simple? changed my life. It's that simple. Just taking

a little time to read the Bible, to pray, and dare to sing. That's it. And I wanna talk through, after you get your breakfast, or your dessert, you can get breakfast too. Dessert for breakfast is always a good thing. But I wanna talk through some of the practicalities of it and some of the benefits of it.