



**Reflection for July 4, 2021, Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson  
First UMC, Portsmouth, NH**

**Psalm 8:1, 3-9**

**Divine Majesty and Human Dignity**

<sup>1</sup> O Lord, our Sovereign,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;

<sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

<sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O Lord, our Sovereign,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

In the first verse of Psalm 8, the Psalmist recognizes and declares God's Sovereignty as the Creator, sovereign over all the earth. Humans tend to forget that when it comes to who is in charge. Countries go to war over because they want dominance and power over others. Often in our relationships, a war of words erupts when someone has the need to be "right." It seems like we, as human beings, have the predisposition to try to "come out on top," which means that someone else "loses."

Yet, the Psalmist knows that God is the true winner and ruler of everything because God has created our world. And then, God trusted humanity to have *dominion* over everything. Notice, the word is “dominion,” not “domination.” *Dominion* means caring for God’s creation (nature, living creatures, and human beings) with responsibility and maturity that flows from our relationship with God and is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

“O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” But God cannot accomplish the care of the earth without us. We are God’s hands and feet in this world; we are the ones who build relationships, chose ecology, and preserve this beautiful creation all around us. We live and act in this world as caretakers, co-creators, and builders of God’s vision.

An American Christian rock band named “7eventh Time Down” wrote the song “God Is On the Move” in which they talk about how God works through us:

*Anytime a heart turns from darkness to light  
Anytime temptation comes and someone stands to fight  
Anytime somebody lives to serve and not be served, God is on the move.*

*Anytime in weakness someone falls upon their knees  
Or dares to speak the truth that sets men free  
Anytime the choice is made to stand upon the Word, God is on the move.*

*I see a generation  
Standing on the truth  
In each and every nation  
God is on the move*

*Anytime the gospel stirs a searching soul  
And someone says, “Send me, here I go”, God is on the move – today.*

July 4<sup>th</sup> is when we in the United States celebrate Independence Day, when we remember the journey of our forebearers who came to a new country to find freedom of religion, freedom from British rule. The Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776, and eventually, the colonies joined together to celebrate their freedom from British Rule, calling themselves the United States of America.

The first sentence of the Declaration of Independence reads: “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*” We have been able live with liberty and religious freedom, and we strive to help others all over the world to find the same freedom.

Today’s Psalm is a reminder that we do not pursue these things without the true sovereign – our God, the God of the universe. God is on the move through us, through many others who seek truth, acceptance, and the freedom God has given us to live life to the fullest and to find happiness. May your July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration be a reminder that we live in a country where freedom of religion provides us with the opportunities to make a difference in the way we live and act because of our faith in Christ. God is on the move through us, throughout the world!

“O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”