

Human Dignity

Scripture (two translations)

Psalm 8 CEB

8 LORD, our Lord, how majestic
is your name throughout the earth!
You made your glory higher than heaven!
²From the mouths of nursing babies
you have laid a strong foundation
because of your foes,
in order to stop vengeful enemies.
³When I look up at your skies,
at what your fingers made—
the moon and the stars
that you set firmly in place—
⁴ what are human beings
that you think about them;
what are human beings
that you pay attention to them?
⁵You've made them only slightly less than
divine,
crowning them with glory and grandeur.
⁶You've let them rule over your handiwork,
putting everything under their feet—
⁷ all sheep and all cattle,
the wild animals too,
⁸ the birds in the sky,
the fish of the ocean,
everything that travels the pathways of the
sea.
⁹LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name
throughout the earth!

Psalm 8 NRSV

Divine Majesty and Human Dignity

To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.
² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your
foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your
fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have
established;
⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of
them,
mortals^[a] that you care for them?

⁵Yet you have made them a little lower than
God,^[b]
and crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶You have given them dominion over the works
of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
⁷all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹O LORD, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

*Resources include umcjustice.org & www.marydeandraws.com

A prayer activity: listening prayer

Need: paper for each child and coloring/drawing supplies

A special kind of listening prayer: where you will listen to a piece of scripture read aloud, three times. While you listen, there may be words that you are unfamiliar with, that's ok. Focus on what you do understand and don't worry about what you don't.

There are different drawing supplies in front of you. As I read the scripture, the first time, just listen to the words. Notice if anything sticks out to you. You'll be drawing or doodling while we do this kind of prayer, but this isn't an art project, it's not about being a good artist or a bad artist, it's just about trying to connect with the word of God in a new way. After I'm done reading, I'll pause for a minute and give you some time to think about what you heard or to just rest with God. Alright, let's begin our prayer time.

Read Psalm 8 then Pause

Say: This time I'm going to read the scripture again, and I want to invite you to doodle or draw in response to what you hear. Maybe there's an image that you hear. This is time for you and God.

Read Psalm 8 again then Pause

Say: We're going to read the scripture a third and final time and this time, you can either

keep drawing the images that you hear in the Psalm, or you can draw how you feel when you listen to this Psalm.

Read Psalm 8 a final time then Pause

Say: Amen

Wonder & Question Together

Where there any words that you don't know?

What is the author of this Psalm praising God for?

How does God feel about humans in these verses?

What is the job of humans in these verses?

How does God treat humans in these verses?

What does it especially say about children/young people?

Does it matter that it is children and infants (young people) who silence God's enemies in this passage?

When you think of people who do important things for God do you typically think about young people? Who do you typically think of?

Listen to the Story

[Let the Children March by Monica Clark-Robinson](#) (please know that this is geared toward mid to older elementary students)

Talk about it

Psalm 8 talks about how much God loves and trusts humans. All humans have dignity, given to them by God. What do policies like segregation do to people's dignity?

What do you think the kids who got arrested, sprayed with water or attacked by dogs felt? How do you think their parents felt? How do you think the people watching on TV felt?

Racism says that one group of humans is higher or lower than the other based a set of physical characteristics (their race). We know that this goes against what God says about humans. God sees us as crowned with glory and majesty (verse 5).

Racist ideas are all around us, and we have to work really hard to fight these ideas with the truth about humans. We have to learn to recognize these ideas when we see them—in ourselves and around us. Do you see any of these ideas in the world around you? How might we stand against them when we see them?

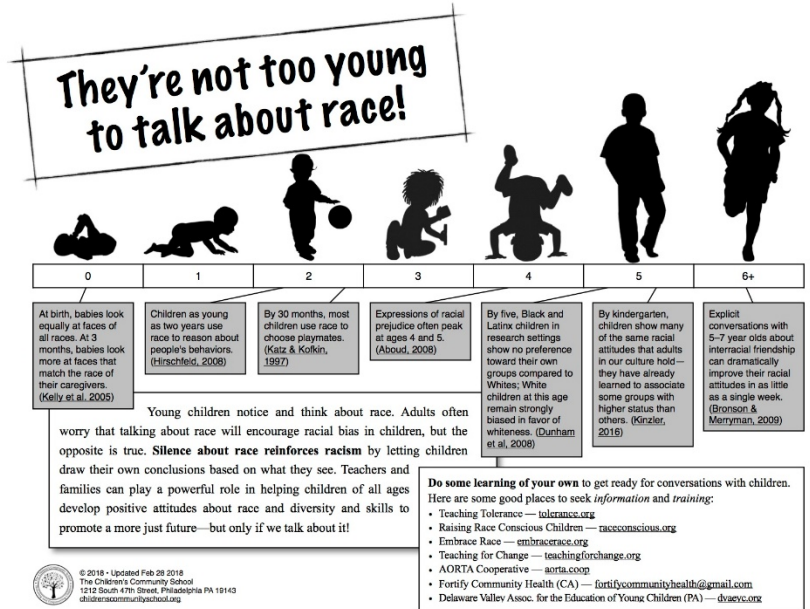
Notes for Parents

The Methodist Church has a complicated history with racism in America. John Wesley and many of the early Methodists were against slavery, but after Wesley died people began excluding African Americans from the church. Some Methodist people fought against segregation, and there were Methodist people like Bull Connor who fought for segregation. What response do you have when you hear about that?

Legal segregation is over in the United States, but we still have enormous differences in the ways people from different ethnic and racial groups get treated. What stories in your lifetime have you heard about people being treated differently because of their race?

The Birmingham Children's march showed that kids and teens have dignity and can make a difference. God loves justice, these kids shut down injustice, like Psalm 8 says... they were a bulwark (defensive wall) against segregation and injustice.

Please take time to read the Methodist Social Community part A section of the book of Discipline attached here. Know that the UMC stands against Racism. These are important conversations for the church to be a part of and children are not too young to talk about race.



(Excerpt from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*)

The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and

implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights.

Rights of Racial and Ethnic Persons

Racism is the combination of the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to the others. Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is manifested through the individual expressions, attitudes, and/or behaviors that accept the assumptions of a racist value system and that maintain the benefits of this system. Institutional racism is the established social pattern that supports implicitly or explicitly the racist value system. Racism, manifested as sin, plagues and hinders our relationship with Christ, inasmuch as it is antithetical to the gospel itself. In many cultures white persons are granted unearned privileges and benefits that are denied to persons of color. We oppose the creation of a racial hierarchy in any culture. Racism breeds racial discrimination. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the Church and in society based on race or ethnicity.

Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total

life. We commit as the Church to move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access.

We commend and encourage the self-awareness of all racial and ethnic groups and oppressed people that leads them to demand their just and equal rights as members of society. We assert the obligation of society and people within the society to implement compensatory programs that redress long-standing, systemic social deprivation of racial and ethnic persons. We further assert the right of historically underrepresented racial and ethnic persons to equal and equitable opportunities in employment and promotion; to education and training of the highest quality; to nondiscrimination in voting, access to public accommodations, and housing purchase or rental; to credit, financial loans, venture capital, and insurance policies; to positions of leadership and power in all elements of our life together; and to full participation in the Church and society. We support affirmative action as one method of addressing the inequalities and discriminatory practices within the Church and society.

An additional story to listen to for this critical conversation:

[Something Happened in our Town](#)

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon + the stars, which you have set in place,



What is man that you are mindful
of him, the son of man that you
care for him? Yet you have made
him a little lower than the heavenly
beings & crowned him with
glory & honor.
You have give him dominion over the
works of your hands + have put
all things under his feet.

PSALM 8:36



[esw]



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