

## **God's Signature**

*Rev. John Allen*

As many of you likely know, my wife Molli is a third grade teacher.

And she has shared with me that there are a few key phrases that make up about half of what she says to her students in a given day.

“Please sit down”

“Stop talking”

“Line up”

“Push in your chair”

“Who's half eaten apple is this on the floor?”

But there is one that is the most frustrating of all, a simple reminder, offered over, and over, again.

“Did you put your name on it?”

I even remember from my own elementary school days that after all the work was handed back, there were inevitably 2 or 3 papers left in the teachers hand.

“I also have a few with no names on them.”

Then up we all walked to the front to examine them and try to decipher whose handwriting it was.

It may seem like a trivial thing to us as children, just a simple way for the teacher to know whose paper is whose.

But the skill that we are learning is much deeper.

Because, for whatever reason, as a society we have chosen putting our name on something, as a sign and seal of our word and our identity.

It wasn't always that way. Once wax seals dominated the ancient near east as a way of certifying the authenticity of a document.

During the Han Dynasty in China, unique stamps carved out of jade and pressed red ink on to paper as a way to ensure that the documents veracity could not be questioned.

But over time, we have come to accept a written name as the surest, and most binding, seal.

We sign our names to contracts and checks. To marriage licenses and to verify credit card transactions.

If you go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, you can see a reconstructed Egyptian gate, and if you look closely you can see the names of Romans from the time of Jesus chiseled into the stone, as a sign that they had made the journey to edge of the empire.

And all the way up to the present day, graffiti artists name artfully scrawled on a wall is a well known way to call out to whoever might be reading. “I was here.”

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It is almost impossible to know who wrote the Psalms. Like so much of the Bible, whoever wrote these words did not put their name on them.

But I actually kind of like it that way.

Because I imagine that this beautiful poem was written by anonymous and faithful person, educated enough to write, perhaps a scribe in the king's court.

But I imagine this unknown one, starting up one night at the sky spangled with stars.

And these words arising in their heart.

“How majestic is your name in all the Earth, O God, our upholder.”

“When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, I wonder, what are we humans that you are mindful of us?”

“O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”

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That image.

That idea.

That God's name is in all the Earth.

I'll admit, I never quite got that phrasing, it never quite sunk in, until I read the work Pamela Greenberg, a Jewish poet who completed a translation of the Pslams in 2010.

In her translation, Psalm 8 begins like this:

"God, our upholder, how vast is your signature in all the earth. It reflects your glory in the heavens."

"God how vast is your signature."

When God made the Earth. And all that walks the ground, or dwells in the seas, and the skies, God put God's name on it.

Not in letters. But in the beauty.

Can you see it?

Can you look like our ancient Psalmist did at a sky of stars and see not only glowing balls of gas, but God's signature?

Can you stand at the water's edge and lean toward the vast horizon, and see in the crest and caps of the waves, and the dance of the clouds, God's signature?

God wants to be sure that we are daily reminded of God's goodness, love, mercy, and grace.

God wants to be sure that we never forget that God is with us.

And so God wrote all over everything. With beauty.

When God created the Earth, God put God's name on it!

Look around. God's own name is written everywhere you look.

Little signs of beauty, and life, and love.

God's way of saying.

I am here.

This. Was me.

But that's not even the best part.

Because God made you too.



Each one of us is a beautiful creation of our God. God is so proud to have made and shaped each one of us that God put God's very name on us.

God's signature.

So that through our lives God the world would know God's beauty, God's goodness and God's love.

God made you.

God put God's name on you.

Not just God's name.

God's signature.

The sure and certain mark of God's real and reliable presence.

God's way of saying:

I am here.

That. Is me.

I did that.