

## Psalm 19

I was on a plane a last week that flew into Denver. And there were strong winds as we were coming toward the mountains. It had been a long flight because the person behind me kept talking loudly and using profanity, sharing details of their personal life with their traveling companion that really no one should know—let alone a total stranger sitting in front of them—a total stranger who would bring up the entire event in a sermon! She even mentioned a friend getting married later this summer but they were afraid to go the wedding because the church might be struck by lightning if they walked in. This person clearly had some baggage not only in the overhead bin but with God as well.

But as we flew into Denver there were strong winds coming off the mountains and our plane began to rise and plunge precipitously and turn from side to side. You could look out your right window and see the ground and look out the left side and blue sky and then 5 seconds later you saw the opposite on either side. It was one of those landings where people texted loved ones and everyone clapped when the wheels hit the runway. But the person behind me as were hurtling toward the earth called out for god. She yelled out loud for god to help us. She even used the name of Jesus—not in the way I might—but she called for Him.

Everyone is aware of God. Even atheists are aware of God. Without God there can be no atheists because atheism isn't based on the absence of God as much as it is that the god atheists see doesn't meet their expectations. It's hard to argue there is no God. But anyone can allege God has let them down.

We are made know God. Not knowing God, the true God, is the cause of our greatest dysfunction.

Psalm 19 teaches us how we can know God.

Psalm 19, written by King David, tells us three ways God reveals to who He is.

The first way we know God is through His creation:

**The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their word to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.**

### Psalm 19:1-6

I know a lot of people, like our friend on the plane, would only in great fear and trembling walk into a church because they are estranged from God. But when they are in nature-hiking in the mountains, camping among the tall trees, fishing by a stream, riding a horse, duck hunting, even flying a kite—God is near.

Psalm 19 tell us that is no accident. Seeing God work and God's character in His creation is not necessarily Paganism—which is the worship of nature rather than its Creator. Bad things happen

when we worship creation rather than the one who created it. Romans 1 tells us that:

**Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

**Romans 1:22**

The intent for God's creation is not to curve us in ourselves or place our faith and trust, our security and our joy in created things—but to point us to Him.

Psalm 19 tells us that the moon and the stars and even the clouds declare the glory of God and that they are so wrapped in beauty that they point to work that only God could do. But even more than that, every day, day after day, night after night, creation will not be silenced. Creation will not shut its mouth. It will not stop talking about God. There is no speech, there are no words, creation's voice about its Creator insists on being heard. And that irrepressible voice does not just speak in one part of God's creation or a couple of two or three or even along the beach or the mountains or looking up into the starry sky way out in the country away from the lights of the city—but everywhere. Psalm 19:5 says that creation's voice goes out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world.

And then David points to the sun alone as one of creation's most telling elements about God.

And this is interesting because the sun was worshipped in cultures all over the world—from Scotland and England to North and Central America, Egypt, Greece, Rome—everywhere. Those ancient people, made in the image of God, saw something of the divine in the sun. In fact, the Celtic cross, whose representation is our stained glass is a nod to the worship of the sun in Ireland. The circle was placed around the cross to suggest the sun or the moon but what it truly means is wholeness, eternity, God's unbroken love for us. And David suggests this when he says the sun travels the entire length of the heavens and there is nothing hidden from its light.

Just like the Lord God.

Creation will not be silent about its creator.

But there is a limit to what creation can reveal to us about God. The phrase that is used to talk about creation's speech to us about God is general revelation—meaning that creation reveals to us some general truths about God—like His power, His omniscience, His creativity, His beauty.

It's so important we don't stop there. It's critical we don't just end our exploration of God at what nature has to say because there is so much more to reveal about God. We are after what theologians have called special revelation—meaning the Word of God's, the Bible's, specific teaching about God.

This is called special revelation. And Psalm 19, after declaring the glory of creation in teaching us about God, takes it even further:

**The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be**

**desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.**

### **Psalm 19:7-10**

I was in Colorado last week for a denominational meeting with a bunch of Presbyterian pastors. And it's a rule—every time Presbyterian pastors get together—they must play golf; written somewhere in the denominational by-laws. That's a problem for me because I swore off golf after I threw my driver 30 yards down the fairway after an errant tee shot. That 30-yard throw traveled about 10 yards further than any golf ball I hit that day.

Some of the non-golfers drove up Pikes Peak. **(insert mountain pics)**. If you have ever stood on a 14,000 foot mountain peak, you know the rare beauty. One of the pastors in our group—in a much more pious way than the golfers—suggested that we pray to thank God for the astonishing beauty He has made.

During that prayer it was impressed upon me again that God didn't call this earth very good until humanity was in it. And the thought filled me with joy. Genesis Chapter One tells on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, after He made the dry land, He called it good. And on the fourth day, after God hung stars in the heavens and the sun and the moon in the sky, He also called it good. And He did the same on the fifth day and the sixth day, when He made the animals in the land and sea and sky, He paused to call it good. The Hebrew word there is **tov**.

But the on the seventh day, when God made man and woman in His image, there is a qualifier in front of the word **tov**—the word **mod**—which means strength or power, much, exceedingly or very.

Only once humanity was in the world did God call creation **mod tov**—very good. This tells us the value of human beings, in the eyes of God, is greater than His creation—that we mean more to Jesus than the mountains, the seas, the lions, the whales, eagles, the greatest of trees and even the stars in the sky.

That knowledge does not come naturally. It is not native to our understanding, we cannot look at creation and simply assume anything like that. Indeed creation might even tell us the opposite—that we are small, insignificant, unworthy, ugly, pitiful, trivial. But God often prizes things that are lowly, ordinary and plain. Jesus sees and loves people we overlook because they seem ordinary.

There have been some pretty ugly theologies, philosophies, religions and political movements that have gotten this wrong by devaluing human beings. Indeed, the first rule for Christians in any law is "Does it promote life? Does it honor the image of God in every human being?"

That's why we need God's Word, that's why we need His special revelation because general revelation is limited and if our consciences are not formed by God's Word, we will do some very ugly things. History has shown that over and over.

Psalm 19 describes God's Word as perfect, right, pure, clean, eternal, altogether righteous, better than gold and sweeter than honey.

Psalm 19 God's Word makes wise simple and makes our heart rejoice.

Do you know who is not perfect? Not right? Not pure? Not clean? Not righteous? Changes moment by moment?

Who would sell their soul for true, real joy? Or even counterfeit joy? Something that gives us a few fleeting moments of pleasure?

You and me. That's who.

That's what sin does to us. Our heart is not pure enough. Our mind is not wise enough. That's why we need God's Word.

The closing words of Psalm 19 tell us exactly how.

God's Word shows us our true self. We cannot know ourselves if we do not know God. And we cannot know God without knowing His Word.

**Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.**

#### **Psalm 19:11-13**

When we were in Israel a couple weeks ago, we visited the ruins of a first century Roman city in the Golan Heights. It is beautiful area out in the middle of the country, amid rocks and hills covered with tall, golden grass blowing in the breeze. You would never know it today but 50 years ago, a war was fought there.

Close to the parking lot—was a fence with a sign—"Danger land mines." Nothing about what we saw, nothing about that beautiful country suggested any kind of munitions buried under the earth. Had the sign not been there or the fence, it would have been very easy to wander into the field of land mines. If someone chose to ignore the sign and hop over the fence, they could easily have had a very bad day.

God's Word, like that sign, shows us what we don't know about our world—what is it not plainly revealed. God's Word is also like that fence, giving us boundaries not to cross. John Calvin said the law is like a mirror that we hold up to our soul, to see what we look like. He said that without God's law we cannot possibly know the true condition of our soul because we have no standard against which to judge. We cannot know ourselves without knowing God and we cannot know God without knowing His Word. The knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves is deeply related.

There are two types of sin from which David asks for God's help.

First, David asks the Lord to reveal to Him his hidden sins. David's trust in the Lord's goodness, grace and love for Him is so great, that He asks the Lord to show him where he falls short, where he is missing the mark, unknowingly straying from God's Word. So, David asks the Lord to inform his mind.

Second, David also asks the Lord to sin presumptuously, meaning to prevent him from knowingly sinning—breaking God's law when he knows better. This is not unknowingly straying across a line,

without understanding, breaking one of God's laws without knowing better. This is a matter of will. This is knowingly rebelling against God. So, David asks the Lord to reform his spirit.

This is the work of God's Word in our life—to transform our mind and reform our spirit.

We need God's Word to do both because only a transformed mind and reformed spirit can know God.

David ends the Psalm with a request. He petitions God for His life to look like the life of someone who knows God. David asks the Lord to live like someone who knows the Lord.

**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.**

#### **Psalm 19:14**

What does our life look like? What words come out of our mouth? What thoughts populate our heart? Do those words, do those thoughts look like someone who knows God? Or do they look like someone who only cries out for God when they think their plane is going to crash. Do our words and thoughts look like someone who is merely aware of God or do they look like someone who knows God.

We are made to know God. And this world needs people who know God.