

Behold God's Glory

Psalm 19

Go ahead at turn in your Bibles to Psalm 19, then hold that place and turn to Matthew 6. As has been our practice throughout this study of select psalms of David, I'd like to once again attempt to supply context for the passage we'll study tonight. However, instead of jumping back to an anecdote from the life of the Shepherd-King David, we're going to jump forward a thousand years to the teaching of his great-great-great-great-great (several more "greats") grandson Jesus, who spoke these heart-warming words...

Matthew 6:25-33

25 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? 28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Tonight, we're going to be talking about SEEKING GOD, but probably in a way in which few of us have truly taken the time, something Kenneth Boa, an author I like to read on spiritual growth, calls "loving God through His WORLD, His WORD, His works, and His ways." We're only going to dive into the first two of those tonight, along with the topic of BIBLICAL meditation.

It's been said, **"God doesn't speak to us more in the wilderness, it's just easier to hear Him"**
(Anonymous).

Several psalms echo this sentiment. The anonymously written Psalms 104 and 148 are other great examples, but with regards to God SPEAKING through the created order, I know of no greater example than David's words contained in Psalm 19, and with that, we'll pick up in verse one...

Psalm 19:1

**To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.
The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**

"To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David" is the beginning of verse one. It isn't a note added by the Bible publisher or even the ancient scribes. As Pastor Kevin has taught in the past, the words "To the choirmaster" tell us that David intended for the Nation to learn the psalm he'd written. The choirmaster would teach the Nation this song, much like Tim announces on a given Sunday, "*We're going to learn a new song this morning!*" David wanted the Nation to go out singing something that would remind them to see God's glory in Creation.

Psalm 19:1 gives us an OVERVIEW of the first half of the psalm, in which David focuses on the Creation, specifically the "heavens" (*Heb. shamayim*), the same word used in Genesis 1:1. Let me start off by pointing out that the heavens don't declare the *existence* of God; that's a given. The existence of God is easily and rightly assumed; the heavens declare to us God's *GLORY* (*Heb. kabowd*). This word figuratively means *weight*; it speaks to God's MAJESTY. It's also translated *honor* or *splendor*. "Splendor" is good description of sights like this...



Study that picture for a moment. Let it melt your heart. Sometimes the sky, a sunrise or sunset, is so beautiful that it doesn't quite seem real, but I believe such otherworldly scenes are about as close as we can come to catching a glimpse of the glory of God this side of forever. When we're blessed to witness such breath-taking vistas, we must remind ourselves that the glory of a blazing sky is FAR SURPASSED by the glory of the One who spoke it into existence. But what do we mean when we talk about God's glory? Paul Tripp describes it this way...

The doctrine of God's glory encompasses the greatness, beauty, and perfection of all that he is. In everything that he is and in everything that he does, God is greater than human description. Every attribute and action of God is stunningly beautiful in every way. Each characteristic of God and every accomplishment from his hand is totally perfect. This is what we mean when we talk about God's glory.

The "sky," same word used in Genesis 1:6, makes it clear that it is the CREATIVE WORK of God. Its vastness and splendor is only explainable as such. Again, there's no talk of God's existence being

proven, as if it were ever in question; the heavens simply yet boldly proclaim, "Look at what God has done!" Of the sky's ONGOING TESTIMONY, David says...

Psalm 19:2-4

**2 Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
3 There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.
4 Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them he has set a tent for the sun,**

Psalm 19:3-4 sounds confusing and disjointed here. The **NET Bible** smooths it out, translating it...

Psalm 19:3-4

**3 There is no actual speech or word,
nor is its voice literally heard.
4 Yet its voice echoes throughout the earth;
its words carry to the distant horizon.
In the sky he has pitched a tent for the sun.**

This is the paradox or the oxymoron of "wordless speech." The Created Order SPEAKS FORTH about who God is, and this silent testimony is understandable by all. Paul echoed this understanding in the introduction of his letter to the Romans when he said...

Romans 1:18-20

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

God has demonstrated His eternal power and divine nature through the things that have been made. How? I've taught this before, but the ETERNAL POWER of God is evident because this TEMPORARY UNIVERSE exists. It began, which means something outside itself is responsible for its beginning, and that something, or Someone would Himself have to be SELF-EXISTENT from eternity in order to be present at any given time to create. That then flows right into the understanding that such an eternal being is DIVINE. He's GOD, and we can understand that from the powerful yet unspoken testimony of Creation.

Sadly, however, there are many who rightly perceive that this universe and all that's in it is just a temporary *effect*, but they refuse to see the eternal *Cause*. As Paul said, God's wrath, just like His glory,

is revealed **“from heaven”** against such people, and sadly, THAT’S WHERE CREATION’S TESTIMONY ENDS! The heavens declare God’s GLORY, and even His WRATH, but it doesn’t declare His GOSPEL. That’s where WE and His WORD come in. That’s why the Word, as we’ll see in a moment, is the natural progression from God’s revelation in His world. Some people ask, *“So, if someone never hears the Gospel, they’re lost forever?”* Romans 10:17 is clear...

Romans 10:17

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Those are God’s Words, not mine. So, the better question would be, *“What are we willing to do to ensure that the lost world hears it?”*

As we observe, and even study, God’s silent yet clearly understood revelation of Himself through Creation, we’re reminded that this is how He often speaks into our lives, through the still small voice. Everything we know about God from His world and His Word tell us that He’s a God who’s desirous for FOLLOWERS, for a people who LEAN IN and SEEK Him. To those who do so, His message is obvious and unmistakable. The glorious message about the God who is there reverberates throughout the earth and will make its way from the distant horizon into the core of our being if we’ll but take the time to listen.

The fact that David points out that God’s glory can be seen in Creation, specifically the in heavens, as well as in His Word is an INVITATION to BEHOLD HIM. If our hearts are ever to be after His, LIKE DAVID’S, we must begin by LOOKING FOR HIM, the very purpose of our creation as Paul taught in the Areopagus...

Acts 17:26-27

26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

The HEAVENS declare the glory of God, the message echoing from one horizon to the other. You know, many love the ocean because its vastness is a picture of the greatness of God. When you think about it, though, there are places in the world where you can’t see the reminder of the ocean; WE LIVE IN SUCH A PLACE! Others point to the mighty mountains as a representation of God, yet those at the beach can’t step out their door and survey the mountains. However, there isn’t a place in the world where you can’t look up and see the sky. The heavens are exceedingly more vast and more instant a reminder of the greatness and glory of God. David said God pitched a tent for the sun...

Psalm 19:5-6

5 which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

6 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.

The subject stays the same through the end of verse six. The heavens are the tent for the sun. It's seen as a bridegroom stepping forth from his glorious chamber where it spends the night. The vibrant sunrise and sunset are like a glimpse of the glory within the sun's chamber, cascading out whilst the doors are open, like the light spewing forth from an illuminated room into a dark hallway. The image of the gloriously attired bridegroom leaving his chamber to claim his bride speaks of LOVE and ANTICIPATION. Our Bridegroom is COMING! The strong image of the champion runner speaks of POWER and DETERMINATION. The sun's heat is no more escapable than the notion that its Creator is even more glorious, powerful, and determined.

Truly, the lights in the sky draw our attention all day, not only keeping time for us, but awing us in the process. Our eyes fixate on light; it's what God made them to do. It only makes sense that He would hang such glorious lights in the sky, drawing our gaze UPWARD and reminding us to LOOK UP, BEYOND THEM, to the One who hung them.

You've heard this illustration before, but imagine taking your family on a vacation to the beach. My family as always enjoyed Topsail Island. So, imagine you spot a sign on the side of the road with "Topsail Island 30 Miles" on it. It would be crazy to stop at the sign and have your family vacation on the side of the road! So, it is with the glory of God in creation. It isn't there for our ENTERTAINMENT. It's a SIGN, directing you to the SOURCE. Don't stop at the sign!

We're talking about more than just PASSIVELY appreciating a mountain landscape, amazing wildlife, or a clear, starlit sky. We're talking about ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR GOD and BEHOLDING HIS GLORY in His Creation! And this is HARD! We're such an ENTERTAINED or else EASILY DISTRACTED generation. Once, while I was attending App State, I listened to a man give a lecture on what he called "Perpetual Partial Attention." It sounds exactly like it means. He talked about a student doing homework on the couch with the TV on, music playing in the background, and checking his phone regularly. Did anything have the student's FULL ATTENTION? Absolutely not, and as time went on, the lecturer posited that the student was training himself to be UNABLE to give anything his full attention. This can be us, our minds and attention being "led around" like a dog on a leash by everything we have going on in our lives, rather than US GUIDING OUR THOUGHTS toward what matters most. This is what makes MEDITATION so HARD, and with that said, I want to take a moment now and talk about *BIBLICAL MEDITATION* because this bears not only upon this first portion of David's writing on Creation, but it's specifically mentioned at the end with regard to the Word and its application in one's life.

Now, biblical meditation is NOT the contorting of one's body into some pretzel formation and burning incense in your belly button as you chant some mantra in an effort to EMPTY your mind. I would argue that that's far from a harmless practice, and that it's actually more of a VACUUM for DEMONIC ACTIVITY. It's the COMPLETE OPPOSITE of biblical meditation. The Hebrew word *higgaion* (hig-gaw-yone') is translated "meditation." It comes from the Hebrew word *hagah* (haw'-gaw), which means to THINK, PONDER, IMAGINE, MEDITATE, even MUSING to musical notation. It can also mean to MUTTER

as in the sighing or other low sounds we make when we're THINKING ALOUD. Biblical meditation is about FILLING YOUR MIND. With what? Well, as Paul said...

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Usually, the discipline of biblical meditation involves filling our mind with the Word of God. I say "usually" in this case because in the first half of this psalm, David invites us to meditate upon God's glory as revealed in nature, specifically the heavens. HOWEVER, this is not to be done divorced from the study of Scripture. God's Word is His SPECIFIC REVELATION of Himself. Our understanding of things is easily corrupted and flawed; God's Word on the other hand is infallible and inerrant, and as we mentioned earlier, the only means by which we may learn of God's plan of salvation. God's Word is PRIMARY, with the understanding, as Jesus pointed out, that we may also learn of God from Creation.

SO, does the notion of meditating on God's Creation sound WEIRD to anyone? Perhaps it makes sense to you, but it's just something you haven't disciplined yourself to do. I'M WITH YOU. I tried finding a quiet spot outside (hard to do with small, curious kids), sit in a chair, focus my thoughts on a particular element of nature around me (the clouds wafting over a nearby hilltop) and allow the Holy Spirit to teach me about God and REMIND me of His Word (again, not divorced from His Word), praying that He would show me His glory, and you know what? I didn't get far. What I sought to grasp in that moment, and what I want to convey in this one, is that the wonder of God's Creation isn't another avenue of entertainment, but that it's SIGN POINTING TO HIM and an INVITATION TO SEEK HIM. To ignore this invitation is to deny ourselves a measure of intimacy with the LORD, so with that, a parting thought before we move on:

What can you do to help yourself become more aware of God's glory in Creation and incorporate this discipline of seeking Him through it into your life?

The teaching of the Holy Spirit will NEVER CONTRADICT God's Word, which is why study and MEDITATION UPON HIS WORD is of chief importance and should be a habit for the Follower of Christ. This is the time when we allow the Holy Spirit to fulfill His ministry as the Master Teacher. Again, this is NOTHING MYSTICAL. Don't allow yourself to conflate the dangerous, mind-emptying practices of eastern meditation with the biblical practice of FILLING YOUR MIND WITH THE WORD. It's as simple (note that I didn't say "easy") a concept as taking time to THINK about what you're reading as you study the Bible, asking the Holy Spirit to teach you, rather than reading a few verses, or even a few CHAPTERS, and moving on. That was my hang up once. At one time I was attempting to study NINE CHAPTERS A DAY, but eventually I stopped getting anything out of it. I told my mentor, Dr. Whipple, and with four words, he simultaneously helped me move past that dry season and introduced me to the practice of biblical meditation. He said...

“READ LESS. THINK MORE.”

You see, I was reading SO MUCH, but I wasn't leaving myself time to think about what I was reading, much less giving myself permission to just camp out on a confusing or captivating passage and just think about it! You may have experienced DRY, ROTE times in the Word before; you may be experiencing it NOW. If you don't already take time to PONDER God's Word, I encourage you to do so. Find a quite, comfortable spot (not one in which you might fall asleep, like your bed), you might even put on some instrumental music (something uncomplicated with which to muse), select a manageable portion of Scripture (a paragraph instead of multiple chapters) or else read as much as you want, but be okay with stopping once you come across a passage that especially grabs your attention, and PRAY.

Psalm 119:18

**Open my eyes, that I may behold
wondrous things out of your law.**

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what the passage means and how to APPLY it to your life as you read over it again and again. The writer of Psalm 1 said that the BLESSED MAN isn't the one who lets his mind be carried away by the philosophies and patterns of this world (Colossians 2:8), but instead MEDITATES on the Law, the Word, of the Lord day and night, and the remainder of Psalm 19 makes it clear that David ascribed to this belief...

Psalm 19:7-9

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

Warren Wiersbe said, **"The way we treat the Bible is the way we treat God."**

AMEN! If you tolerate a LOW VIEW of Scripture in your life, it's likely that YOU, and not the LORD, are the god of your life. You can't have a HIGH VIEW of God without a high view of His Word. It's apparent that David CHERISHED God's Word. Now, note the transition. In the first half of the psalm, David focused on the glory of *EI* (the God of Creation) as seen in His GENERAL revelation of Himself in Creation, where he pointed out that the most prominent feature was the sun. As David now shifts his focus to

God's SPECIFIC revelation of Himself in His Word, the Law is featured most prominently, and David refers to God SEVEN TIMES by His covenant Name, *Yahveh*, the LORD. He uses SIX different names, natures, and effects to describe the Word of God...

The "Law" is the Torah, which means *instruction, direction, teaching*. David extols its PERFECTION, which means that it's complete, not lacking, and the effect of God's Law (His WORD) is that, as we submit our lives to it, they won't lack either. IT IS LIFE, and it restores and preserves one's life.

The "Testimony" of the Lord is the *same name used for the Ten Commandments*. The Testimony is SURE, meaning that it's reliable, it's the basis for the Law, it's been TESTED and VERIFIED, and the effect it has is that it makes wise the SIMPLE, which doesn't refer to the scoffer, the fool, or the naïve, but the CHILDLIKE, those without knowledge who are seeking it. This effect speaks to the humility of one who is willing to be taught.

"Precepts" is a reference to God's *statutes or mandates*. Because God's mandates are UPRIGHT and JUST, what's meant by "right," they're cause for rejoicing unlike the legislation or mandates of crooked leaders, which cause heartache and hardship.

"The Commandment" means *that which is appointed*. It's PURE and clean, and it enlightens our eyes like a road map for life.

The "Fear" of the Lord has to do with living mindfully of Him and His Word. Warren Wiersbe said, "**To teach the Bible is to teach the fear of the Lord.**" The goal of teaching God's Word is to help others submit their lives to it. Too often, though, we're quick to live in the fear of other peoples' expectations, our schedule, and popular opinion. We allow these things to reign over our lives instead of God. The fear of most things cause people to be distressed and despair, but NOT the fear of the Lord. This fear cleanses our lives. It endures forever, permanently establishing our lives.

Finally, the "Rules" or *judgments* of the Lord are TRUE and RIGHTEOUS just like the character of God. In them we see HOW TO PLEASE GOD, His perfect righteousness is revealed, and we're shown our constant need for grace. David goes on to say...

Psalm 19:10-11

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

**11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.**

This was David's PERSONAL REACTION to the Law of God. Instead of loathing the "rules of the Lord," like the world does, David delighted in them. He DESIRED them! Here AGAIN (go back and talk about how

there are those who refuse to see the obvious Creator behind the Creation), we see the difference one's "starting point" makes. David see's God and DESIRES God, therefore, He desires the rule of God. He would've agreed with the Apostle John, who said...

1 John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Do you desire God and His Word more than wealth and security? The commandments of God are not burdensome or *grievous*. David says that they're "**sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb,**" symbolic of something that was *delightful* and *healthful*. God's Word is GOOD and GOOD FOR YOU, something David reiterates in saying that "**in keeping them there is great reward,**" which points back to his first designation of God's Word, the Law, as "instruction or direction" that "preserves or restores life!" Listen again. The Word of the LORD restores the soul, imparts wisdom, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, reveals God's righteousness, and endures forever. GOD'S WORD TRANSFORMS US (Romans 12:2), as long as it dwells in us (Colossians 3:16). Paul wrote to Timothy...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

...and Peter assures us that...

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Beholding God's glory in His Creation and in His Word is TRANSFORMATIONAL, which causes us to LOOK INWARD. David wrote...

Psalm 19:12-14

12 Who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

13 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.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

be acceptable in your sight,

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

David names something called "hidden faults." Hidden from God? NOPE. The fact that David goes to the Lord to declare him innocent from his "hidden faults" makes it obvious that the faults aren't hidden from God. They're hidden from David! They're the sins that he (we) fail to understand are sin.

"Presumptuous sins," on the other hand, are WILLFUL sins, sins we commit in arrogance, presuming upon the grace and forgiveness of God. David asks for God to hold him back from such sins, to not let them rule his life. Again, David's caught a glimpse of God, and he wants to be CLOSE to Him.

He ends by praying that his words and thoughts are as glorifying to God as the declarations of the heavens. For this, he calls upon His ROCK and REDEEMER, the ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT of which is the LORD Jesus Christ. He is Creator (Colossians 1:16), and He is the Word (John 1:1, 14). In the Incarnation, Christ, the Living Word, became flesh, just like His Creation, and He taught us to see God, His glory, His works, and His ways in Creation. He's the Sun of Righteousness and the perfect fulfillment of the Law. Both Creation and the Law condemn us to death, but the One who is PREIMMINENT IN BOTH, through His death on the cross, declares our sin debt PAID IN FULL, which is THE GOSPEL WE MUST TELL. By His blood He has redeemed us, and like a ROCKY CLIFF DWELLING, He is able to KEEP US SAFE FOREVER. David exalted and rejoiced in the GLORY of the LORD revealed in His world and His Word. Whether he knew it or not, as he called upon the LORD, HIS Rock and Redeemer, he was calling upon the One who is glorified above all in both, the Savior who would one day proceed from his own line. We see this prayer echoed by our Lord's half-brother Jude in his Doxology, and I would love to close reading it together with you...

Jude 1:24-25

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

LORD, You are GLORIOUS...