Psalm 19

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[0:00] I want to invite you all to grab your copy of the Scriptures, grab your Bible, and open up to Psalm 19.

! We have periodically returned back to the Psalms over the last few years.! And so you might call this an intermittent, a spread-out sermon series. We've made our way from Psalm 1 up to Psalm 19. And at the rate that we're going, I think I'll be in my 80s when we finish the Psalms. But either way, we're going to keep plugging ahead. And occasionally when we are in between longer sermon series, we will return back to the book of Psalms.
So in September, we'll start a study on Titus. But this morning, we're going to spend our time in this one of my favorite of all the Psalms. In fact, C.S. Lewis held out that this particular Psalm was the greatest poem ever written in human history.
And so it comes with high praise, not only as the Word of God, but also as a work of art in and of itself. And so this is a good place for us to land this morning right here at Psalm 19. And so as we read this together, I want to invite you guys to stand back to your feet.
[1:18] We'll begin in verse 1 and run down to the end, verse 14. David writes and tells us, 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 words 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.
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.
[2:28] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them your servant is 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. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight.
Oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Father, we thank you for this poem. We thank you for this song that we have the privilege of spending the next few minutes thinking about and pondering and seeing your glory made manifest and seeing signs that are pointing us to the great work of Christ on the cross for us.
And so we ask that the same spirit who moved King David to write these words would move in us, not just to make our minds capable of understanding the truth, but to give us hearts that overflow in joy as we respond to the truth.
[3:53] We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Amen. In 1980, there was a famous sort of documentary series.

I think it occurred in 13 parts that some of you might remember. I can remember as a small kid seeing at least portions of this documentary played in science class and at other times.
But it's called The Cosmos. And it was co-produced and narrated by Carl Sagan, who himself was a well-known astrophysicist and became famous because he was one of those scientists who

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devotes himself to sort of popularizing some of the more difficult concepts of science.
So think of him as probably a much more sophisticated Bill Nye the science guy for all things space-related in the 80s. That's who Carl Sagan was. And in this documentary, he opens it with these words.
I can remember seeing this opening. I remember seeing the waves, this video footage of the waves crashing on the seashore and in these great cliffs as he himself walked out on the cliffs.
[5:02] And you can hear his voice. And he says this in the opening line. He says, The cosmos is all that is, or was, or ever will be.

In other words, his point is, this is all there is. The physical world, the universe that we see around us, whether it's the ground beneath our feet or the stars in the sky, that's all there is.
It's all there ever has been. The physical, material universe is all that exists. And you can see the contrast between the worldview of one like Carl Sagan and the worldview of the inspired writer David.
As he opens this song and he says, The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.
So David looked at the same world and he saw not a limited universe or a limited cosmos. He saw not something that was alone and by itself.
[6:08] But David looked out at the world around him, at the stars in the sky and the ground beneath his feet, and he proclaimed that this world, this creation, this universe or cosmos, it exists to declare the glory of God.

And that is in fact what it is continually doing. It continually, without ceasing, proclaims the handiwork of God Himself in fashioning and in creating the universe.
And David is not alone in seeing the world in this particular way. If you turn all the way to the end of your Bibles, you're welcome to turn there. You can look on the screen. You'll read the words of John, apostle and prophet.
And as he records this song, Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.
So the apostle John, as he records the song of these angelic creatures, he presents us with a counter to the view of men like Carl Sagan.
[7:18] He says that the world exists to bring honor and glory to its creator, that God Himself made all things. Or in the words of David, this world is the handiwork of God Himself.

The writer of Hebrews carries it a step further and says, not only has God created the world, but it's by the word of His power that this world or this universe is upheld. In other words, it is held together by the very word of God, keeping it in existence.
That's the biblical view of the cosmos, of the universe itself, that God made it and God holds it together, and therefore the universe itself bears witness to the greatness and the glory of God Himself.
And the truth is that that's something that, despite all of our attempts, we cannot escape. If you continue on and listen to Carl Sagan's comments at the beginning of that documentary, in his next sentence he says this, he says, Our feeblest contemplations of the cosmos stir us.
There is a tingling in the spine, a catch in the voice, a faint sensation, as if a distant memory of falling from a height. We know, he says, that we are approaching the greatest of mysteries.
[8:45] So even in his atheistic worldview, in which he cannot conceive of anything other than the physical universe, he acknowledges that this physical universe is doing something to us as we behold it.

It stirs us. It draws on a faint memory. He can't bring himself to acknowledge what that faint memory is. As if we are falling somehow.
And that's not the case. It's not as if we are falling. It is if we are created in the image of one who is infinitely greater than us, and the universe exists to direct all of our attention toward the creator of all things.
Yes, contemplating the vastness of the universe will make a tingle go up your spine. Yes, looking at the night sky filled with its stars will stir you inside.
But you have missed the point if it doesn't stir you and cause to rise up within you. Worship of God himself.

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[9:52] Praise of the creator. And that's exactly what David is telling us the universe exists to do. The universe exists. The furthest flung galaxies are out there in order to make known and to reveal the glory of God himself.

That's what the universe is doing. The universe is showing us. It is revealing to us. It is proclaiming, making known information about God himself.
In fact, Paul, the apostle, comments on this role of the creation itself in the first chapter of the book of Romans. Listen to these words. He says, what can be known about God is plain to them.
Them being us, humanity. Because God has shown it to them. 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.
In other words, God has made his existence and his infinite power known to us just by virtue of bringing the world into existence.
[11:05] We look into the night sky and we see that it is incomparably vast. Even as we learn, even as we extend our knowledge of the created world, of the universe itself, what we are coming to realize is that we are but a speck of dust in the galaxy in which our solar system is found.

And that galaxy itself is but a speck of dust among the billions of galaxies that exist in the universe. And all of that exists to proclaim the greatness of God himself.
The heavens are actively, continually declaring the glory of God. And that idea of them continually declaring the glory of God, I think is the point of verse 2.
Note, David says, day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. In other words, there has never been a time, and there will never be a time, when the glory of God is not being put on display by the creation itself.
There is not. There is no hidden pocket of history in which we might say, well, God's glory couldn't be seen at all. Well, God couldn't be known on any level at all during this period of time.
[12:32] I know continually, day to day, all the time, forever, the creation itself is telling us and is declaring to us the glory of God, that God is real, that God exists, and that it is infinitely greater than His creation.

He is there, and He is worthy of our praise. This is what the universe is telling us. And not only is it extensive in terms of time and duration, not only is God's glory being proclaimed all the time, but it's being proclaimed everywhere.
Notice, if you move down a couple of verses, notice verse 4. Their voice, that is the voice of the heavens, their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
All the earth, end of the world. There is no place in this world where we can go to hide from the revelation of God in the created world.
We can't extract ourselves from creation. We are a part of creation. So no matter where we go, no matter where we might hide, there will be evidence of God's greatness and God's glory abundantly all around us.
[13:53] In fact, David wants to make this point so clearly to us that he begins sort of an extended metaphor there in the second half of verse 4.

So he looks to the sky and he chooses out, let me show you what I mean by this. And he chooses the greatest light in the sky, at least from the perspective of us who live on the earth.
He chooses the sun and he says, let's consider the sun for a moment. And listen to what he says. He says, in them, in the heavens, 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.
He says, its rising is from the end of heavens and its circuit to the end of them and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
There is no place and there is no time that is not touched by the revelation of the existence and the greatness and the glory of God Himself through the created world.
[15:00] This is how God designed things. But the truth of the matter is is that this great and glorious revelation of God to us, while it is extensive in time, it is at every time and it is extensive in location, it is at every place, it is still insufficient.

It is still not enough. It is a clear revelation of God. No one has an excuse. The Apostle Paul goes on in Romans 1 and says, therefore they are without excuse.
In other words, we can't claim that we didn't know. We can't claim that we had no knowledge of God. We cannot. And yet, for all the greatness and even the goodness of God's revelation of

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Himself in the created world, it's not enough.
It's insufficient. I think that's being hinted at at the end of verse 6 where we're told that nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun. Because this particular word, heat, is the same word that is used throughout the Old Testament for anger or wrath.
And so there is this sort of double meaning in this word, I think, and there is this hint that because God has made Himself known, none of us is excluded from the righteous wrath of God that we ourselves deserve.
[16:25] None of us can escape this great heat or this great anger that is rightly directed at us. Apostle Paul, of course, explains that in Romans 1 and he says it is because though God has universally revealed Himself to mankind, mankind has also universally rejected that knowledge in favor of idolatry.

And it might be the idolatry of the primitive who builds an idol and bows down to it or who looks to the sky, these things proclaiming God's glory and assumes that those lights in the sky are God's and they bow down to those.
Or it might be the idolatry of the modern atheist like Carl Sagan who again looks to the created world and attributes to creation the things that are stirred within them by the revelation of the glory of God Himself.
We are, as John Calvin has said, we are a factory of idols. And as God reveals Himself to us through the creation, we all, on our own, apart from the grace of God, we all twist and distort and reject the clear revelation of who God is in the creation and we become idolaters.
The revelation of God in creation, which some people call natural revelation, the revelation of God available to everyone, which we call general revelation, it is good, it is a good gift to us, but it is just not enough for fallen sinful people to arrive at right and true worship of God Himself.
[18:05] It is insufficient. Which means that we need something more. And God has in His mercy and in His grace provided us with that something more.

And that is what the second half of this psalm is all about. The second half of this psalm is to turn the page and say, as great as that revelation of God is, there is something far better that He has given to us.
Take a look at verse 7. 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 all together.
So over and over He tells us, but there is a greater revelation of God Himself in His written Word. The Word of God itself written down and recorded to us by the prophets and later by the apostles.
[19:13] This Word is better than the proclaiming of creation itself. It is, in the words of David, it is perfect, which is to say, it is blameless, it is without error or corruption.

It is sure, which is to say, it plums a straight line for us. It can be dependent upon. It is, He tells us, right.
It never wavers, it never goes off into error. It is pure, He says. We can trust this Word because it is without contamination.
See, there is, in the minds of a lot of even professing Christians, that the Bible shows us a lot of great things about God and it's really helpful and we should pay attention to it, but there's also a lot of other stuff mixed in with it that we as more sort of enlightened 21st century Christians, we need to be able to sort of draw out the husk, the kernel of truth from this husk of the Bible itself and so we can discard some of that stuff in the Bible that's not really God's Word and we can mine out of it the truths that we need to find.
That's not the perspective of David. That's not the perspective of Jesus Himself. It is not the perspective of the apostles. The Word of the Lord is pure. He says that it is clean, it is unstained, and then he goes on to conclude by saying it is true and it is righteous.
[20:51] The sum total of all these descriptions of the Word of God is to say that it is better than the revelation of God Himself in creation and it is itself sufficient and it is enough and you can rely on what we see revealed about God right here in this Word.

It will never steer you wrong. There is no mixture of error with the truth in the Word of God. It can be counted upon. Every word, every page can be counted upon in this book.

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David is trying to tell us. You want a more clear revelation of God? You want to clear away the fog so that you can see a little bit better?
You want a revelation of God that shows you more than His existence and His greatness? You want to see who He really is and enter into a relationship with Him? You need to know about Him from His Word.
This is the secret. This is the path to everlasting joy in the presence of God Himself.
[22:04] You wonder how the creation, how the Son can run its course with joy? You want to experience some of that in your own life to run your course with great joy and to know God?

You need this Word. You need it. Notice the things that He says that it can do. That's what it is, but look what it can do. It can give life. It revives the soul, He says.
It grants us wisdom. He says it makes wise the simple. It brings that great joy that we long for. He says it rejoices the heart. It gives us discernment in a world that is full of error.
This world is mixed with error. This book is not. And He says it can give us discernment. It enlightens the eyes. And then because it endures forever, it gives us a kind of stability that we don't get to experience through any other means.
I mean, we live in a constantly shifting and changing world, and our own lives are always changing. We're moving from one place to another. Our jobs change. Children grow up and enter into different stages of life.
[23:12] We ourselves grow older. We are always in a state of change. At least most of us are. I had two separate people.

And you're sitting here, okay? Two separate people this week laugh at me because of a picture that Allie put on Facebook that was, we'll just say it was a few years old, right?
And the issue with the photo primarily is the fact that while I look vastly different, she looks exactly the same as she did in that picture. And so I've caught a little bit of flack about that.
I can see it. I look in the mirror every day. My real concern is not today. My real concern is at this pace, how are things going to look in ten years? That's my real concern, right?
But we all know, though, that we are all of us. We are changing. We're not only changing physically, but we experience different things in life.
[24:09] Things change. It's not a stable, steady world. No matter how stable your family feels at the moment, it's not always stable. You don't know what's around the corner.

This life is full of instability. And yet, the psalmist David tells us that the Word of God endures forever. It can be trusted.
It doesn't change. It doesn't move on us. It remains where it is. You plant your feet upon the Word of God when you let your roots grow down into the Word of God.
You will possess a grounding and a stability that you cannot find anywhere else. We try. We try to find it at work. We try to find it in our families.
We try to find it in our friendships and relationships. We even sometimes think that we might find it in the church. But the reality is, as beautiful a gift as the body of Christ is and the local body of Christ itself, it is the Word of God itself that gives us life and wisdom and joy and discernment and the stability that we long for.
[25:24] So great is this Word that David describes it by thinking of the most valuable and the most pleasing things that he can imagine in the world in which he lives.

Right? He turns to gold first because it is the most precious, beautiful thing that he can think of. Now, not a gold nugget out of the ground, right?
But gold. Refined, pure gold. In the ancient world, kings used gold for a number of things. It wasn't as if it was just a small little ring that they wore on their fingers or earrings in their ears.
They used gold for all sorts of things and it was prized not just for its monetary value. It was prized for its beauty. And so David thinks of that which is both valuable and beautiful in his world transcending all other materials around him.
And he lands upon gold and he says, more to be desired is God's Word than gold itself. Even much fine, refined, perfected gold.
[26:27] It's better than that, he says. And then he turns to another aspect of life. He turns to sort of culinary expectations so that the sweetest thing that they experienced was honey.

And he says, it's sweeter than honey. It's sweeter than the fresh drippings off of a honey cone. Now, I don't know how many of you have ever had the fresh honey. There's a world of difference

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from the things that you buy on the shelf at the grocery store.
It's good. And for David, it was the best. He says, the Word of God is more desirable than the best things that we can see and the best things that we can taste.
It's better than those things. In fact, the reason it's better is because it does something to us. It does something on the inside of us.
Note verse 11. Moreover, by them, by God's commandments or by God's Word, your servant is warned and in keeping them there is great reward.
[27:34] So he points out sort of a dual purpose of God's Word. On the one hand, the Word of God warns us and it protects us. And he elaborates on that in verses 12 and 13.

Notice he says, who can discern his errors? Well, not me. I miss it all the time. I'm pretty aloof sometimes at the things that I'm doing that are messed up and that are wrong if God doesn't show me.
Who can discern his errors? And he even says, declare me innocent from hidden faults. In other words, protect me even from those sins that I'm unaware of. Reveal it to me by the power of your Word.
And then he goes on and he says, keep back your servant from the ESV. He says, presumptuous sins. It is arrogant things. It is things that we do not accidentally.
Not merely by omission, but it is the sins that we are pursuing and intentionally committing. It is the idea of, in the face of who God is, turning around and choosing something else.
[28:40] And David says, protect me from that. Keep me back from those tendencies. He says, let them not have dominion over me. Then I'll be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

This is what we want. We want to be purified. We want to have our sinful tendencies erased. We want to have them removed from us.
And David is telling us very clearly that that's the sanctifying work of the Word of God in the lives of God's people. It is there to warn us, to help us to remain innocent of both those hidden faults that we don't initially recognize that the Word of God reveals, and then it steers us away from these arrogant, prideful sins and turning away ourselves.
It steers us away from that and it protects us from those things. It warns us. But then he goes on and says that in keeping God's Word, there is great reward.
What does that look like? I think he tells us what it looks like in verse 14. He offers it up as a prayer. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.
[30:05] See, there is no greater reward to be had than to know that your life is pleasing to the Lord. To know that you are day by day living a life that pleases God Himself.

And it's the description of God here at the end that helps us to understand why in God's people that causes such great joy to well up within us. Because he addresses God as my rock and my Redeemer.
The truth of the matter is that the Word of God can be none of these things to you. It can do none of these things within you if you do not have Him as your Redeemer first.
You must have God as your Redeemer and your Rock. The word Redeemer means someone who pays a price for someone else.
It's used many times to refer to buying someone out of slavery. In the New Testament, the Greek equivalent of this Hebrew word is used to describe over and over the work of Christ on our behalf.
[31:13] Jesus uses a related term in the Gospel of Mark when He says that I did not come to be served but to serve and to give myself as a ransom, that is as a redemption price on behalf of others.

Over and over, the apostles refer to Jesus as the Redeemer. Jesus has come in order to pay the price for our sins.
And if you don't have Him as your Redeemer, if you've not put your faith and your trust in Christ Himself so that He then becomes your Rock, the Word of God can do none of these things for you.
Some of you might sit and think, I mean, I've read the Bible, I've heard a lot of sermons, and it doesn't hit me this way. I don't see it as life-giving. I don't see it as, it doesn't feel like I'm wiser for having read it or more joyful for having read it.
I don't feel like I'm able to be more discerning. I certainly don't feel like my life is more stable because I've read the Bible. I'm not seeing this. I'm not sure that David's words ring true for me.

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[32:19] And the truth is because David is writing this song as one who has been redeemed. That's who he is as he writes this song. And we must be among those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

We must turn away from our sins and put our trust in Christ so that His death pays the penalty for all of our sins. and that great heat of the sun is squelched by Him at the cross.
The wrath of God itself is absorbed by Him as He endures on our behalf and cries out, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me for us and in our place and therefore becomes our Redeemer?
When that happens, two things happen to you. One is that you are put into a new relationship with God Himself.
Now the Bible describes this in a number of different ways. It describes it using the language of adoption, that we become children of God through faith in Christ and therefore fellow heirs with Christ.
[33:32] Describes it by saying that now God is our friend, whereas formerly we were God's enemies. But the point in all of that is to say that we have a new relationship with God once we've put our faith in Him and Christ Himself has become our Redeemer.

And that's not a concept that is foreign to this psalm. That's one that I find as I read through this psalm. That where we once were, though we had the revelation of God in creation, it was insufficient to bring us in relationship with God, but the Word of God that brings us the Gospel message and tells us about this Redeemer, it happens in the context of a new sort of relationship.
And I see that because of the ways in which God is addressed throughout the psalm. In that first half of the psalm where we are being told about God's revelation of Himself through creation, God is only referenced directly one time and it's in verse 1.
In other words, you only find a direct label or term or title for God once. Verse 1, the heavens declare the glory of God. And that word God is a pretty accurate translation because it's a word that's sort of generic in its meaning.
It just means God. It's all it means. But as you come to the second half of the psalm, seven times God's covenant name suddenly appears.
[35:06] The law of the Lord is perfect. The testimony of the Lord is sure. The precepts of the Lord are right. The commandments of the Lord is pure. The fear of the Lord is clean. The rules of the Lord are true.

And then at the very bottom God is addressed as O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. This is the covenant name of God. This is the name by which God made Himself known to His people.
This is Yahweh in relationship with those whom He has redeemed. And this is the message of this psalm. That God has been gracious to all of humanity in revealing Himself through the creation.
And yet it falls short because we fall short as sinners. And yet God has once been gracious. And for those whom He has redeemed and made His own, He gives us the gift of His Word so that we might have life and wisdom and joy and discernment and steady, stable ground beneath our feet so that we might live lives that cry out to Him, let the words of my mouth, let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight.
O Yahweh, my rock and my Redeemer. The purpose of the Word of God is to bring you into a relationship with God by proclaiming the Gospel message to you and then in that relationship to mature and grow and sanctify you as you sink your life into this book.
[36:45] Let me just give you one point of application I think that's I think it's pertinent for us at our church. The truth is that we have been given this great gift of God's Word.

We have it. We possess it. Every week I stand up here and I spend 45 minutes to an hour doing my best to help you understand it and apply it to your lives. We have this.
We are among the redeemed. And yet out there is a world and all they have is a general knowledge of God made known through the created order and it is not enough for them.
It will not save them. It will condemn them because they will reject it in their fallen state. But it won't save them. Paul tells us in Romans chapter 10 that if we don't proclaim the gospel no one will be saved.
That apart from the preaching of the Word itself humanity is left without hope. And preaching doesn't mean necessarily what I do here.
[38:03] Preaching just means talking. It just means telling the person in the cubicle next to you or telling the person sitting at the desk next to you in school or telling the mom in your mom's group.

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It just means telling them about the great Redeemer that we know so that they themselves might be redeemed and enter into a relationship with Him. We are surrounded by a vast sea of need.
And if we do not take the Word of God to them the great need of redemption in the world around us will not be met. this Word is sweet and good for us and it is the only hope of the world.
Let's pray.

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