

"A Humble Response to a Glorious God"

Psalm 19

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(God; Worship)

Are there any differences between the two men I'm about to describe?

Tom gets up on Monday morning and heads for work at Martin Marietta. Each day for five days he brown bags his lunch, gets home by 6, watches the news, has dinner with the family, and gets to bed by 11. Three nights a week he has obligations with soccer practice and as president of the homeowners association and with his wife in bridge club they belong to. On Saturdays there are either soccer games, baseball games or yard work to do. On Sunday he sleeps in, reads the paper and watches the morning news shows. In the afternoon there are Bronco games, a nap and dinner with the family on Sunday night.

Bill gets up on Monday morning and heads for work at Public Service. Each day for five days he brown bags his lunch, gets home by 6, watches the news, has dinner with the family, and gets to bed by 11. Three nights a week he has obligations with soccer practice, taking kids to music lessons, and a Bible Study group. On Saturdays there are games to attend and things to do around the house. On Sunday he sleeps in, gets to church and then in the afternoon watches the Broncos, takes a nap and has dinner with the family.

Is there truly any difference between these two men? I've not told you enough about them for you to answer that question but it does illustrate the questions I want to ask you: "What is different about the way you act and even think because you believe in God?" "How does your knowledge of God's existence change the way you live?" "Does it make any significant difference that you believe in God?"

All people who have ever lived tend to think of themselves as living under unique circumstances. We are no different. But while we may live with horsepower rather than horses, and computers rather than abacuses, and in prefabricated homes rather than tents, the truth is that men and women in all of human history have struggled with largely the same issues.

3000 years ago, David the King of Israel wrote a song, Psalm 19. Please find it in your Bible and think with me about it today. It speaks to us. David moves in his thoughts in this Psalm from the most remote to the most particular - from the most general to the most specific. He begins with "The heavens declare the glory of God" and ends with "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight O Lord" In this Song David takes the largest themes of life and puts them in an order that causes us to rethink ours - rethink our lives. Those themes are the

revelation of God in creation, secondly, the revelation of God in Scripture, and third a person's response to such a God.

Even a casual reading of the Psalm will reveal these three distinct parts of the Song: Verses 1-6 speak of the glory of God revealed in creation.

Verses 7-11 speak of the glory of God revealed in the Scripture.

Verses 12-14 give us David's response to God's glory.

I said these are the great themes of life because if there truly is a God and He is as unique and as powerful as the created world describes then what is our response to such a God? If there truly is a God and He is as holy and loving as the Scripture describes - then what is our response to such a God? Again I ask, "What significant difference is there in your life because you believe in God?"

Look with me again at the first six verses of the Psalm. As in Psalm 8, so here, David begins with thoughts about the magnificent skies above him, "The heavens declare the glory of God". Do you ever feel the need to just pull away for a few hours every so often and get reoriented - to get a fresh perspective on life? Often I will drive up Bear Creek Canyon or I-70 or on top of Green Mountain or Lookout Mountain. From there I can put life in focus so much better. Somehow the largeness of it, the grandeur of the mountains and the beauty and vastness of the sky help me once again get the arms of my mind around life.

There are a couple of passages of Scripture and a couple of books that do that for me as well. When I read them I am sufficiently removed from the daily-ness of life and the overload of detail that I can reorient myself to what is important. I sense that is what David was doing when he wrote these verses. Once again I imagine that he has walked out of Jerusalem and is standing on a high hill overlooking the valleys below. Or maybe this song was written when he was younger and he worked and slept outside almost year round.

Whenever it was, he wrote Psalm 19:1-4, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*"² *Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*"³ *There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*"⁴ *Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*

Be it day or night, the sun or the moon, the blue sky or the stars, David says, "I think of God when I see the work of His hands." In that first verse the Songwriter says, "The heavens above me, the skies over my head, keep on telling, keep on recounting, keep on conspicuously displaying the truth about God."

In the second verse he says that day after day they keep telling the same story - there is a God and he is powerful. Night after night they repeat the message - God is and he is great.

In the third and fourth verses he says there is no place in all the earth where their message is not heard.

And what is the message which the skies proclaim? They proclaim the glory of God and work of His hands. In other words they clearly demonstrate the Awesome uniqueness of God and His power.

Look with me at Romans 1:18-20.

The Apostle Paul must have thought of these verses in Psalm 19 when he wrote his words to the Romans. Writing under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit of God, Paul says, *"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

What is it that God has made so plain to everyone according to Paul? His eternal power and divine nature. Those are the same aspects of God that David said are so clearly present in the skies, in the heavens: The fact that God is and that he is so powerful.

A hundred years ago Edward Hitchcock, an English minister wrote that it is obvious that David and others of his day took pleasure in witnessing the manifestations of God's presence and greatness as they looked at creation. They had not learned, as we have, to place unbending natural laws between God and his works and then give those laws such inherent power that we virtually remove God from the present. (Spurgeon I, p 277). We make of God some removed "clockmaker" who wound it all up in the beginning and then left it to run itself. Even Christians have removed God from the immediate so that we speak of natural laws as if there is no Creator actively working behind them. I detest the term "Mother Nature". Some people around us attribute the pleasurable aspects of the creation (the beauty of the mountains, the skies, the seas) to "Mother Nature" but they attribute the unpleasant or tragic events of the creation to "acts of God." How patently unfair and wickedly wrong. Rom.1:21, *"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

Aristotle wrote "that if a man lived underground and there looked at and read about the great art and science of the day and afterwards was brought up into the open day and saw the glories of the heavens and the earth, he would immediately pronounce them to be the works of such a being as we define as God." Aristotle was wrong. Yes, the beauty, order, complexity, and immensity of creation should have that effect but the Bible says that instead people universally worship the creation instead of the God who made it.

The Apostle Paul uses this concept of the witness of creation to point out that

every human being is guilty of rejecting the truth about God that is so clearly seen in creation. **But David's point is something else:** He is not writing to demonstrate guilt but to indicate the glory of God as seen in creation. David is struck with the awesome uniqueness of God, his glory, as demonstrated in the heavens and the power of God as displayed in the order of creation.

In the latter part of verse 4 and then through verses 5 and 6 David goes on to use the sun as an illustration of the awesome uniqueness and power of God displayed in creation. *"In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,⁵ which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat."* He likens the sun to a bridegroom, rising on the morning of his wedding, ready to go and receive his bride. And he likens the sun to a champion runner eager to run the race set before him. In both cases there are vitality, strength and anticipation of joy or victory. So it is with the sun, it rises at one end of the heavens and makes it circuit to the other - and nothing is hidden from its heat.

That description of the sun is a metaphor of how universal and powerful is the sovereignty of God. As the sun reigns victorious over all the earth and every day so God reigns sovereign over everything. The Psalmist's point is clear: The awesome uniqueness and power of God are visibly demonstrated all around us every day.

Charles Spurgeon commenting on the glory of God as seen in creation used several word pictures to capture it. He uses the image of a balance scale, the pans on chains where weights are put on one side and then the commodity being measured is on the other side. At another point he uses the image of us as mirrors created to reflect the image of God. At still another point he pictures the earth as a freight wagon with wheels and axles. Listen to his picturesque words,

"Yon Alps, that lift their heads above the clouds, and hold familiar converse with the stars, are dust at which the balance trembleth not compared with this divine immensity. The snow crowned summits fail to set him forth who dwelleth in Eternity and bears alone the name of High and Lofty One. Depths unfathomed are too shallow to express the wisdom and the knowledge of the Lord. The mirror of the creatures has no space to bear the image of the infinite. 'Tis true the Lord has fairly writ his name and set his seal upon the creatures brow but as the skillful potter much excels the vessel which he fashions upon the wheel, ev'n so, but in proportion greater far, Jehovah's self transcends His noblest works. Earth's ponderous wheels would beak, her axles snap, if freighted with load of Deity. Space is too narrow for the External's rest, And time too short a footstool for his throne. Even avalanche and thunder lack a voice to utter the full volume of his praise. How then can I declare Him! Where are words with which my glowing tongue may speak his name! Silent I bow and humbly I adore. (Spurgeon I,p 80)

That is what the Psalmist feels as he thinks of God reflected in all God has made. What difference does it make in the way you act and even think that you believe in that God? How does that knowledge of who God is change the way you live?

If there truly is a God and He is as unique and as powerful as all creation describes - then what is your response to Him?

But David goes on as if to say, "If you think the revelation of God in creation is awesome just consider God as revealed in the Scriptures! And so we come to the next section of Psalm 19:7-11, *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple."*⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes."*⁹ *The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous."*¹⁰ *They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb."*¹¹ *By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."*

In these next verses David piles line upon line to give us a further picture of God. Notice the six words that are nearly synonymous. One beginning each thought in verses 7-9 - six words describing the written Word of God: law, statutes, precepts, commands, fear, and ordinances. We can too easily think of the Bible as static religious print on page but to David these laws, these commands were the revelation of God's living person to David. Notice that each time he refers to them as the law, or statutes, "of the Lord". This word "Lord" is a different one than we found in the first verses. In verse one it is the Hebrew "EL" expressing the power and majesty of the creator God. In each of these later verses it is the Hebrew "Yahweh" expressing the personal loving God of His people.

These instructions of the Bible are windows into the heart of God - God's word was for David a precious revelation of God Himself. Notice also that with each synonym for the Bible comes as an adjective describing it: The word of the Lord is: Perfect, Trustworthy, Right, Radiant, Pure and Sure. When God expresses Himself through His Word it is flawless, what he says will not fail, it will lead you in a path that is straight, it is the real thing, it is perfect and it is absolutely dependable.

And notice also that with each synonym and each adjective there is a result: To know God through His word changes us. Verse 7, The Law of the Lord "revives the soul" God, by His Word calls us back to himself restoring us to a right relationship to Him. Verse 7 The statutes of the Lord "make wise the simple". To the one who is open to learning, the simple, God by His Word, keeps from the disaster of foolish thinking and living. Verse 8, the precepts of the Lord "give joy to the heart." When a person lives in obedience to the Word of the Lord there is a joy, a satisfaction of doing what is right. Verse 8, the commands of the Lord "give light to the eyes." God, by His Word, helps us distinguish what is true from what is false. Verse 9, the fear of the Lord endures forever. God, by His Word, will never fail us. Verse 9, the ordinances of the Lord are "altogether righteous." God, by His Word, shows us the perfect standard by which to live. In six different ways David tells what the Word of the Lord means to him and then in verses 10 and 11 he summarizes his feelings:

*"They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

*By them is your servant warned;
In keeping them there is great reward."*

All the gold in the world and even the sweetest honey directly from the honeycomb to a hungry man are not as valuable to me as the Word of the Lord. Why? Because there is a God, and He is sovereign. And God through His Word has given me knowledge about Himself and me and life and death that if I listen and obey will give me life both now and forever.

Verse 11 says, "By them is your servant warned, in keeping them there is great reward." There are probably few things in life that break the heart of a parent more than to have a son or a daughter who will not listen. To have a child who rebelliously goes his or her own way rather than taking the good counsel of the parents. How hard it is to see your child refuse to learn and have to go through the heartache and loss of foolishness.

David says I know God in His Word is giving me the counsel that is life, and fulfillment, and genuine long-term happiness. In His Word, God is revealing Himself and His loving will to me. His awesome uniqueness and His power are revealed in creation BUT His perfection and His love for me are revealed in His Word.

What is different about the way you live because you believe in that God? How does the knowledge of who God is change you? If there truly is a God and He is as unique and powerful as all creation describes - then what is your response to Him? If there truly is a God and He is as holy and loving as the Scripture describes - then what is your response to Him?

Let me show you David's response: Psalm 19:12-14 *"Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. ¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression. ¹⁴ May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

Do you recall from the New Testament when Jesus miraculously enabled the disciples to catch fish when they had fished unsuccessfully all night? When Peter saw that demonstration of Jesus' divine power, he was so awed and humbled that he said, "please go away from me for I am a sinful man!" Do you recall from the Old Testament when Isaiah had a vision of the holiness of God on His throne? Isaiah fell to his face when he saw the awesome uniqueness of God and he cried, "I'm dead, How can anyone stand before such a God!" That is David's response as well. As soon as he thinks of God's glory and power as revealed in creation and God's perfection and holiness as revealed in the Scriptures he feels sinful and desperately in need. In verse 12 he immediately recognizes that he is so prone to wander from God's counsel, so riddled through with impure thoughts, and selfish motives and unkind remarks and disobedient actions many of which he doesn't even see in himself that he asks for forgiveness. "Who can discern his errors - who can tell all the ways I have sinned

against God and still sin against him without even knowing it. Oh, God, forgive my hidden faults."

Just because you didn't see the sign that said, "Do not drive beyond this point" doesn't mean that you weren't breaking the law when you drove past it. And when you subsequently drove your car off the embankment and people were injured you were no less guilty because you hadn't seen the sign. We may sin ignorantly, as Saul did when he persecuted the church, but we are still culpable - still guilty of sin. David, says "God I don't even know all the ways I sin against you but when I see you in all your glory and holiness I can only do one thing - ask you to forgive me. There are also sins of weakness. Peter denied that he knew Jesus in a moment of fear -it was not a considered response. We too may sin in a moment of sudden passion, fear, anger or desire that outruns our judgment. But are we any less liable? Is it any less a sin? NO. And it needs the forgiveness that only God can grant based on Christ's death on the cross.

But David goes on to admit his willful sins as well: As David murdered Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, with malice aforethought, intentionally, thoughtfully and willfully so here David cries out to God, keep me from willful sins. He asks God for protection, for the purifying power of God to help Him recognize sin and keep from it. Elsewhere David said,"Set a guard over my mouth"

Yes David sees himself as sinful and needy but finally David ends with worship based on hope. He says, instead of sinning I want my actions (the words of my mouth) and even my thoughts (the meditations of my heart) to be pleasing in your sight O Lord my rock and my redeemer. God, you are my rock, my refuge, the one who protects me from foolish sin and error that would ruin my life and my soul. God, you are my redeemer, my savior, the one who forgives my sins and frees me from guilt and condemnation. Because of what you have done for me I can join the heavens above and the Scriptures themselves in praising you. Oh, God, that is my desire - receive my praise.

What difference does it make to you that God is, that He is sovereign, that he has revealed himself in creation and in the Bible? Will you acknowledge Him today? Will you confess your sin today? Will you ask and receive forgiveness? Will you seek His counsel in His Word that you may live? Will you join in praise of Him through your words and your actions and even in your thoughts?

Are you taking seriously the God of creation and Scripture? Is he your God?