

The Glory of God

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[0 : 00] Well, it's a very good morning from me, as it was a very good morning from him. We start a series in the Psalms, and it is like pick a number from 150.

! What a poet wrote in the 19th century.

Why the garden? Why are you closer to God in the garden than anywhere else? Is it because of the variety in the garden, all the flowers, all the colours, all the shapes? Is it because of the beauty, the smells?

Is it because it points to a creator God? Why not be closer to God up in the Alps, for example? Or maybe out at sea? Why a garden?

Or could it not be the case that you're closer to God in an earthquake? Because there you see the power, feel the power of God. Raw power. What about when you look at a sunset?

[1 : 24] Are you not closer to God when you look at a sunset? Now, just imagine that you and a friend go for a walk one evening. It's a clear night.

You look up at the sky, and you marvel. Both of you feel great awe and wonder at the vastness of the universe. But only you say to your friend, look at all that God has made.

Isn't it fantastic? These heavens, they declare the glory of God. Your friend doesn't really believe in God. So your friend says, yes, I agree with you.

It's vast and it's wonderful, isn't it? But he can't hear anything. But you, you with your biblical eyes and biblical ears, you look at what God has done, what he has made, and you hear something.

So you're able to worship him, because he made it. Psalm 19 starts out with what Alec Matea calls the silent word of creation.

[2 : 34] The silent word of creation. Look at 1 to 6. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.

You see how in Jewish poetry, the second line reinforces the first one, often a little bit stronger. Day after day, they pour forth speech. Night after night, they reveal knowledge.

They have no speech. They use no words. No sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth. Their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. It's like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other. Nothing is deprived of its warmth. Now, you might think that creation is just, well, there.

[3 : 36] You just open your eyes and there it is. We see it. And we name it. We examine it. But is it just there? The psalmist says, no, there is more to creation than just being there.

It speaks. And it speaks to us. And it reveals the glory of God. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.

They pour forth speech. They reveal knowledge. You see, that's what the created order of this world is designed to do. The natural world.

To showcase its creator. It's the shop window to look at God. Indeed, anything made, anything you make, I make, anything made tells you something about the one who made it.

The artist. The potter. The person who put the hinges on the door. Tells you about the person.

Everything that was made tells you about the maker. Here is God the creator showing off what he can do.

[4 : 43] Now, you might think the stars just twinkle. They're pretty. They're arranged with beauty and order. But the psalmist says, no, they say something to us. They say something. Day after day they pour forth speech.

Night after night they reveal knowledge. Verse 2. Yet they have no speech in and of themselves. They use no words. No sound is heard from them. And yet their voice goes out into all the earth. Their words to the ends of the world. They speak. All creation speaks eloquently of its creator. To all the world. Their voice goes out to all the world.

Everybody can see. Now, there's a rather nice little swing in the psalm. This is poetry. There's a beautiful little pendulum swing here.

Did you see it? So you get in verse 2 that they pour forth speech and they reveal knowledge. But you get in 3 that they have no speech.

[5 : 41] They use no words. There's no sound heard from them. And yet in verse 4, their speech goes out to the ends of the earth. You see the swing. Now, the silent word of creation.

Listen. Makes no outward noise. But still speaking. Think of the vastness of the universe. Look at its regularity and its order.

In the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. This is a picture of the covering of a wedding where the bride and groom stand under the canopy in a Jewish wedding.

In the heavens, God has pitched a tent for the sun. It's like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. Like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other.

Nothing is deprived of its warmth. That's the dramatic display of the sun. Like a bridegroom claiming his bride.

[6 : 45] Like an athlete running across the world. Do you see what the psalmist is saying with those illustrations? He's saying he is the overarching rule of God over all his creation.

It's handmade. Nothing is hidden from his creation. God is over all. Look at the sun. To the ancients, of course, the sun was a god in itself.

Helios. But the psalmist shows the sun created by God. There's a lovely line from G.K. Chesterton. Where he says, every morning, God tells the sun, come on, it's time to get up.

And it does. Now we have sun worshippers today. Not merely on Mediterranean beaches, for that matter. Some of them are in their yoga classes. The instructor tells them in the yoga class to turn and face the sun.

It's a source of light. People today look for their signs of the zodiac in the newspapers. Their daily guidance. They're based on movements of the sun and the moon and the stars.

[7 : 54] But these aren't the gods. God is above these gods. God is the maker of the sun, the stars and the moon. The sun isn't God. The sun is a created light made by God.

God put it there. It's his way to help us see his superlative creation. Look at its beauty. Look at its variety. Look at its intricacy.

What do you make of the complexity of the human eye? Or the sensitivity of the human finger? Or the capacity of the human brain?

Yes, I know we only use 5% of it. But think what would happen if we use 95% of it? Do they not all say something to us? Do they not testify to a brilliant creator?

Not a committee. Not a matter of randomness. We're wowed and astonished by it. I was brought up in a Jewish part of the east end of London.

[8 : 57] With bricks and concrete and tar all around me. I never really understood creation when I was younger. But when I started to follow Jesus from teenage years onwards.

And started to understand his involvement with his father in creation. I came to see the world with new eyes. God made all of this.

And he made it for us to enjoy it. And to worship him. Because of it. Now we call this idea of creation. Nature. General revelation.

It's general in the sense that everyone has access to it. Paul argues in Romans. That because of creation. No one can stand ignorant before God.

And say I don't believe you existed. In fact hold a hand in the psalm would you with me. And come over to Romans chapter 1. Now let's see it for ourselves. Don't just take my word for it.

[10 : 00] It's in the scriptures. Romans 1 verse 20. Romans chapter 1. Page 1128. The unnamed 1128. 1129 is numbered.

And look at verse 20. Romans 1 verse 20. Look what that says. God has made everything plain to them. For since the creation of the world. God's invisible qualities.

His eternal power. And his divine nature. Have been clearly seen. Being understood. From what has been made.

So that people are without excuse. Or go on to Romans chapter 10. And look at these. Romans chapter 10. And verse 17.

I'm sorry to wake you up in the middle of a nap. But just come with me to Romans 10. And verse 17 please. Consequently. Faith comes from hearing the message.

[10:58] And the message is heard through the word about Christ. But I ask. Did they not hear? Of course they did. Their voice has gone out into all the earth.

Their words to the ends of the world. If you weren't napping a few minutes ago. You would have known that came from Psalm 19. Everybody can hear.

Everybody has some clarity. That there is a God who exists. And who rules the world. Everyone can see there is a creator. It's our stubborn sin.

That suppresses the truth. So we might see the power and creativity of God. But we don't yet know God's name. We cannot know God personally.

Just by observing nature. All we know is that he is the most brilliant maker of everything. And ruler. And we are to marvel at him. We are to praise him.

[11:57] We are to worship him. But we cannot know him relationally. Just from nature. That's why we call it general revelation. Everyone can see it.

But there is a second revealed truth. And that is special revelation. So very abruptly in Psalm 19. If you come back to it with me.

Notice the change at verse 7. The NIV has tried to give a slightly larger paragraph break there. The author changes tack. He talks about the heavens and about the creator.

Now he talks about the law of the Lord. This is special revelation. It's not creation. It's law. It's the law of the Lord. And look at the word he uses for Lord.

It's a personal word. Whereas he had the glory of God as the general word for God. Ordinary little capital G but small letters. Here it's small caps for Lord. That personal name Yahweh.

[12:56] His own personal name. I am. Who I am. See the change? A general word in verse 1 for everybody can see. The specific word for those who can have relationship with him in verse 7.

We now know his name. It's a covenant word. It's a relational word. It's a word which means I can have a friendship with you. The word Yahweh. That's his name.

That's who he is. It's the first part of the verb to be. I am. So if Matir called the first section the silent word of creation.

This is what he calls this middle section. He calls it the perfect word of God. 7 to 10. The law of the Lord is perfect.

It refreshes the soul. Here's another word for law. The statutes of the law are trustworthy. They make wise the simple. Here's another word for law. The precepts of the Lord are right.

[13:57] Giving joy to the heart. Here's another word. The commands of the law are radiant. Giving light to the eyes. Therefore the fear of the Lord is pure. Enduring forever.

Here's another word. The decrees of the Lord are firm. And all of them are righteous. Or altogether righteous. It's a lovely set of words.

A range of words for law. Statutes. Precepts. Commands. Decrees. And they each have an effect on us. Just go over the section again. And see the verbs. What they do.

They refresh the soul in verse 7. They make wise the simple at the end of 7. They give joy to the heart.

In verse 8. And light to the eyes. And they're all firm. Solid. Absolutely righteous.

[14:53] The end of verse 9. All of them are righteous. So we now see not merely what God has made. What he can make. We now see what God is like.

We see his heart. We see what he loves. We see what he values. And don't they resonate with us. These are the values we want to build our lives upon.

You see whole industries have developed. To give us peace. And tranquility. From health spas. And all the places where you can get refreshment. To brilliant education.

We all want to impart wisdom to one another. We want a quest for personal happiness. It never ends. It flows. But isn't God's law better than all of that?

Isn't knowing God through his word better than that? No wonder David says in 10. They are much more precious than gold. Than pure gold.

[15:56] And you have to like honey if you want to understand the last bit. They're sweeter than honey. Than honey from the honeycomb. I had a friend who gave up the Christian faith. And when we asked him why.

He was a friend from college. He'd been our CU leader. And we asked him why. He said because I don't like honey. And he was quite serious. He thought that some of the illustrations were stupid. Because they didn't affect him. He couldn't see the relational. The personal. It was all theoretic to him. God's law is fantastic. You know why? It tells us about God.

Not only does it tell us about God. It tells us about ourselves. Because if you want to understand yourself. You've got to understand God. It reveals God's rescue for us. How comes? The law shows us how far short we've fallen of God's law.

In it we see God's absolute truth. We marvel at its high standards. And we say that's such a contrast to me. How can I become like that? That's special revelation for you.

[16:59] It becomes personal revelation. And again at verse 11. Although the NIV doesn't make the break so strongly. The tone changes once again. In the song.

The law starts to impact me. As I read my Bible. It both warns me. And it encourages me. Matea calls this the acceptable word.

Of a sinner. The acceptable word. Of a sinner. By them. By the word of God. Your servant is warned. In keeping them. There is great reward.

For who can discern his own errors? Then he goes into a personal prayer. Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins. May they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless. Innocent of great transgression. May these words of my mouth. He says. And this meditation of my heart. Be pleasing in your sight.

[17:58] O Lord my rock. And my redeemer. See the question here. In these verses. Is what will I do. With God's revealed word. I can see his creation. I can read his word.

What will I do. With his word. Because our actions. Will reveal our hearts. Can I really see. The depth of my sin. As I look at God's word.

Could I pray. Forgive my hidden faults. As his word points out. The perfect way of life. Could I ask that my willful sins.

Will not rule over me. Verse 13. Because I long to be blameless. I'd like to be innocent. Of great transgression. I want to be pleasing.

In God's sight. Don't you? So you see what's happening here. When you get to 14. The king has been musing. Actually he's been singing.

[18:56] These songs are meant to be sung. You see it says. It's for the director of music. If only we knew the tune. If only we knew the tune. But we don't. This is a song.

This is poetry. He's been musing. He's been thinking about creation. He's been pondering about the law. He's been praying for salvation. He says. All these thoughts.

Are meditations of my heart. And he addresses them to the Lord. His rock. And his redeemer. Now. My relatives were Jewish. And they would have sung this song. In the synagogue. Or said it. In the synagogue. But they wouldn't have acknowledged.

Another king. In David's line. Anointed king. The Messiah of Israel. Israel. He was a good Jewish man. And he too. Would have prayed this psalm.

[19:58] He would sing. Of creation. Displaying God's glory. He would love the law of God. And meditate on it. He would pray. That he would not fall into temptation. Yes.

I even think. He would pray. That God would forgive him. His hidden faults. It's a bit puzzling. But I think. Jesus would have prayed that. Yes. It's true. He was perfect.

And he had no faults. But surely. He felt temptation. Even more keenly. Than we do. With all the pressures. Of life around him. And he would never want.

To disappoint his father. Or choose to go his own way. Didn't he say. Not my will. But yours. Father be done. If Jesus did that. Is it not imperative.

That we do that as well. And we do that. Through him. So we must always ask. For forgiveness. We must ask regularly. That we won't be ruled.

[20:52] By our willful sins. You see. Our problem. Isn't just temptation. Our problem. Is actually openly. With an open hand. Taking the wrong way. So for that.

We must have his forgiveness. Mustn't we? Having seen creation. Having heard. From God's word. What would be.

The acceptable word. To come from your lips. And mine. What action. Would you show. That you took God seriously. So did I. What place.

Would you give. To Jesus. The king. In your life. How would you develop. Your friendship. With him. So that he's no longer. God. Out there. But he's a friend.

And rescuer. In here. Well I think. You might start. By using. The words. Of verse 14. As your own prayer. You look at creation.

[21 : 48] You look at the scriptures. You love Jesus. And you say. These words. Let's say. Them together. May these words.

Of my mouth. And this. Meditation. Of my heart. Be pleasing. In your sight. Lord. My rock. And my Redeemer.

Dear Heavenly Father. We praise you. For your magnificent creation. For its power. And beauty. And intricacy. All reflecting. Your activity. We thank you. For your law.

Showing your perfection. And our huge shortcomings. We bless you. That the law. Lead us to Christ. Our stand in. Our rescuer. The one who does. For us. What we can't do.

For ourselves. Thank you. For his forgiveness. We take hold of it. Right now. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Well there is a song.

[22 : 44] Based on those last words. Oh Lord. My rock. And my redeemer. And I have a feeling. It might be up. For the next one to sing.