

Revelation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 July 2011

Preacher: Jonathan Smith

[0 : 00] As I said, we're in the next couple of months looking at the book of Psalms and tonight Psalm 19 is one that I chose to lead off with because it's one of my favourite Psalms and the reason it's one of my favourite Psalms is because it brings together two of my great passions and that is enjoying God in creation and enjoying God in His Word.

That's what this Psalm is all about. You can remember Psalm 19 pretty easily because the first kind of half is about enjoying God in creation or hearing from God through creation and the second half of the Psalm is about enjoying God and hearing from God in His Word.

So my goal tonight is to connect you with the ministry of God in the world and in the Word. My purpose, my goal is to connect you with the ministry of God in His world and in His Word.

If that's going to happen, we're going to need God's help. So let's pray together and then we'll get into this passage, this Psalm. Father, thank you so much for your Word and for your world and we thank you particularly for Psalm 19.

And I pray now that your Spirit would make really clear to us what you're saying to us through this Psalm. I pray that the meditation of my heart, the words of my mouth would be pleasing to you.

[1 : 36] I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Keep that open, Psalm 19, open in front of you. We're going to walk through it pretty quickly. And then I've got a couple of things I think God really wants to say to us as a people from this Psalm.

So let's kick it off just looking at verse 1 together. It says, The heavens are telling the glory of God. And the firmament, that's the sky, the heavens, proclaims His handiwork.

One thing I really like about this new generation is its concern for the environment, for creation. You're seeing this a lot, right? A lot of emphasis in our community on taking care of the world around us.

And I got stopped recently actually in the city by someone who was really passionate about this, wanted me to sign up to something or other. And they were really passionate about conserving the world.

The sad thing was as I got speaking to this person, got into conversation with them about what they're so passionate about, the sad thing was that it became clear that they had no idea about the Creator who created the creation.

[2 : 52] They hadn't ever connected with the God who provided all that we have. I think this is really common in a lot of environmentalism today. If you look around, a lot of these environmental organizations are passionate about conserving the earth, but they have no idea, no regard for, no respect for, no understanding of the God who created the creation.

I think that's really sad. See, according to this psalm, according to the Bible as a whole, the creation has a purpose. And it's not just to exist.

It's not just to provide us with goods. It's not just for us to appreciate. It's not just for us to conserve. The purpose of creation is to tell us something about the glory of God.

See that in verse 1? The heavens are telling the glory of God. And the firmament proclaims His handiwork. That's the purpose of creation. To tell us something about the glory of God.

To tell us something about the Creator who created all things. So to disconnect creation from its purpose is a really sad thing.

[4 : 15] We're going to see through this psalm that it means that we won't really understand what creation is all about to begin with. I wonder if you've ever thought about why it is that the creation is so immense.

Why is it that the universe is absolutely, almost infinitely huge? Coming from a Christian worldview, where God is mainly concerned about the earth, and then within that, mainly concerned with this

human race.

It doesn't seem odd that there is so much else in creation. Galaxies, universes, just vast beyond all comprehension.

And I think the reason that God has created such a vast universe is because its purpose is to proclaim the glory of God. And in order to proclaim the glory of God, it's got to be immense, because the glory of God is immense.

God Himself is immense. And so it takes a boundless creation, a boundless universe, to communicate that. You with me?

[5 : 31] Next time you read about the latest discovery, the latest universe that just makes us look tiny, think about the glory of God.

That's the purpose behind such a vast universe. The purpose of the universe is to tell the glory of God.

How does it do that? Verse 2. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. I looked up that term, pours forth, and the Hebrew word behind it is literally gushes. Day to day gushes forth speech. Night to night declares knowledge, the creation around us, the sky, days and nights, their purpose and their function is to gush forth knowledge about God. They're just preaching all day long to us about who God is, about how great He is, about how majestic He is. They gush forth speech.

[6 : 42] There's this whole ministry going on in the world around us, this preaching, this preaching, teaching ministry. Constantly teaching us, preaching to us, proclaiming to us the glory of God.

How awesome He is, how huge He is, how magnificent He is. day to day pours forth speech, night to night declares knowledge.

And yet it strikes me that some of you here tonight look around at the creation around us. Maybe saw that sunset tonight streaking through the clouds.

beautiful sunset. Maybe observed that. Some of you go to incredible places around the world that are designed to take your breath away and you feel nothing.

I don't get you guys at all. At all. It's like when you go to a museum or an art gallery and you see this beautiful artwork and there are people who can just gaze at it all day and there are others who just kind of walk past.

[7 : 58] That's what we're like. There are some people who are just so insensitive to God's creation. To what He's saying to us through it.

They're deaf to it. Even Christians are like this. And that's not the way it should be. You should look around. You should see a sunset.

Sunrise. Mountain range. Little flower. And you should see the glory of God.

You should hear a sermon being preached to you by creation about the magnificence of God. Don't be insensitive to the world around us.

More on that in a second. The reason I think that so many of us are insensitive to it comes in the next couple of verses. Verse 3 and 4. It says, There is no speech nor are there words.

[9 : 02] Their voice is not heard yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. You've got this gushing, shouting, preaching, proclaiming creation that's constantly day and night telling of the glory of God and yet there are no words.

I think that is the issue. Therein lies the problem for so many of us. There are no words. And so we're so used to gaining knowledge to hearing about God through the medium of words, reading, hearing, writing, that we miss this wordless sermon that the creation is preaching all day long. It's shouting, it's gushing forth, but there are no words. And because we're so word dependent, we sometimes miss it. But we need to know that God doesn't waste words.

God never says a word in vain. He never utters anything without a purpose, without meaning. And so all day long he's preaching to us through the creation, not wanting to waste a single word of it. and when we go through our life, through the motions, particularly us, Western, modern, scientific, focused on our screens, hardly ever outside, we miss the wordless sermon that he's preaching.

[10 : 34] I do this every morning with my little girl India. We go out and we listen to God's wordless sermon together.

What we do is we try and do both in Psalm 19. We start with our Jesus Storybook Bible, don't we sweetheart? If you've got a kid or know of any kids, buy them a Jesus Storybook Bible, best Bible in the world, honestly.

And we read that and then we go outside unless it's really cold and raining and we just listen to God preaching to us through creation. We notice colors and contrasts.

We try and pick up on the magnificent, the magnitude of the creation around us in our backyard. Because I want Indy to be sensitive, to have her ear tuned in, to these words that the creation is gushing forth to us about God.

So don't neglect the ministry of God, the teaching ministry of God in His creation. Second point, second half of the Psalm.

[11 : 58] We're going to talk about God's word in His scriptures. I'll read 7 through 10. It says, The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, the drippings of the honeycomb.

This is God's word. The scriptures, the Bible that we have in our pews and on our shelves and next to our beds, this is God's word to us. And the psalmist is just himself sort of gushing forth about God's word in the Bible, how important it is for us.

And particularly he wants to point out, I think, that God's word is light and life to our soul. It's God's word that regenerates our hearts.

[13 : 14] It's God's word that really takes us from having sinful, dark, closed off hearts to having hearts that are open to God, willing to follow Him, willing to worship Him, regenerate hearts.

It's the work of God's word that does that. It gives light and life to our souls. 2 Timothy 3.15 says that the scriptures, God's word, are designed by God to make us wise for salvation.

It's kind of an echo of verse 7, isn't it? the decrees of the Lord are sure making wise the simple. Another translation says making us wise.

Paul adds to Timothy that the way they make us wise is by making us wise for salvation. It's the scriptures that open our eyes as the Spirit works through them to save us.

We've seen this right throughout church history. Some of the great men and women of church history have been regenerated, have had their souls enlightened through reading the scriptures.

[14 : 30] Got a few examples here. St. Augustine right at the start of church history, he read Romans 13, 13 to 14. It's what it says. Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy.

Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires. He read that and he was saved. It was the word of God regenerating his sinful heart.

He was saved. Martin Luther was also saved reading the Bible. He read Romans 1, 16. It says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

He read that, he was saved. His heart was transformed. He went from hating Jesus to loving and serving Jesus.

Romans 1, 16. Jonathan Edwards, he was a pastor and theologian in the US. He read 1 Timothy 1, 16. It says, But for that very reason I received mercy so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example of those who had come to believe in him for eternal life.

[15 : 55] He read that and he was saved. The word of God enlightened his soul, caused him to trust in Jesus.

ears. That's one of the major purposes of the word of God, is to reach into our dark sinful hearts and to switch on the light that makes us able to see who Jesus is and what he did for us.

So I want to ask you, do you love God's word? do you read God's word do you spend time meditating on God's word the psalmist says verse 10 just check yourself if this is how you feel about God's word he says more to be desired are they that is God's word than gold even much fine gold sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb in that day that was just the best dessert that you could get was honey the sweetest thing in existence he says more to be desired than gold more than honey more than anything sweet is the word of the Lord is that how you feel about the word of the Lord God's purpose in giving us his word is to enlighten our hearts make us Christians and then it's also his purpose to persevere us nourish us if you don't read the Bible I

promise you that your spiritual life will shrivel up it may not die but it'll shrivel up it'll be dry it's not the only way that God nourishes our faith I've already said that God does that through creation as well through many other means but one of the primary ways he nourishes us is through his word so that's the psalm it's a great psalm in studying it I was thinking to myself and this I see this is my main job as a preacher and a teacher I was asking God what's the prophetic message that you have for us as a church what's the prophetic message what's the word that you would have us hear to change us as a result of hearing about this psalm what is it that God wants to do in our hearts what change does he want to affect in us as a people as a family as a church and I think there's there's probably two things that really jump out to me

I'll just share them with you and then we'll pray and we'll be done first of all I really want to encourage you to hear God's speech that's gushing forth through his creation one of the great things about this church is the emphasis we have on reading God's word I know that we're all about that here that is primary and that's good should be primary but don't neglect God's word to us through his creation I mean seriously just think about this examine yourself when was the last time you just looked up at the sky when was the last time you went out on one of these clear nights and just looked at the stars like when was the last time you just shut the laptop and went outside and just looked at a leaf when was the last time you went down to Ruffy Lake Park and just looked over that beautiful pond and listened to God speak through his creation because according to this psalm he's gushing it forth don't be insensitive to God's word through his creation

John Stott I think sums this up really well not just in the words I'm about to read but in his life if you know John Stott he's I think he just turned 90 he's a really old Englishman but has a great ministry teaching, preaching ministry that's what he's known for he's a Bible teacher commentator but he's also a great naturalist particularly a bird watcher he's got books just on birds so he's a great naturalist and I got this quote from him that I just love and it really sums up what I'm trying to say he says to us particularly us here tonight us Bible believing evangelicals you're right you're with me he says this to us we seem to have a good doctrine of redemption right sin salvation trust in Jesus eternal life we seem to have a good doctrine of redemption but a bad doctrine of creation yet God has given us in nature and in scripture a double self-revelation a double self-revelation he's showing himself through scripture and through creation so nature so nature study and Bible study should go hand in hand amen both are explorations into the revelation of God right so if you're sitting here thinking

[21 : 39] I don't like what John is saying I think you know we should be doing more Bible study and less nature study just you can trust John Stott alright he's got runs on the board you can trust him let me read that again let's read it the way he's written it we seem to have a good doctrine of redemption but a bad doctrine of creation yet God has given us in nature and in scripture a double self-revelation so nature study and Bible study should go hand in hand both explorations into the revelation of God it is a beautiful thing to take your Bible and to go outside you get double self-revelation from God read straight through Romans if you want without a break and then look up and get both don't neglect the ministry of God in his creation that's the first thing I wanted to say the second thing is just to say this and this really

I think this truth is really over and above everything that I've said already and that is to say particularly if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian this is really important I believe that you won't get God's world and you won't get God's word unless you understand the man who perfectly represents both the man who perfectly represents God's word and the man who perfectly represents God's world that is Jesus Christ have you ever thought about it this way? we heard it in John chapter 1 we have Jesus Christ the word of God John chapter 1 in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God John calls him the word he is the perfect representation of God's word he is God's word personified and you have this word this man Jesus who is in existence before all eternity before there even was a creation there was Jesus and then later on in verse 14 it says John says that this word became flesh he became blood and bone and guts the word became flesh and so you have God's word and God's world coming together in perfect harmony you have God's word living a perfect sinless life the perfect representation of humanity and creation and unless you understand who he is and what he's done then you won't get the world and you won't get the word he's the key to both you get this in Romans chapter 1 where it talks about how in creation

God is telling us something as we've heard in Psalm 19 and he says everyone should be able to get that but they don't Paul says God has made himself abundantly clear in creation but because of our sinful hearts we look at creation and we don't see God this is the reason environmentalism doesn't have a place for the creator because they look out and they see leaves and trees and birds and fish and animals and everything else but they don't see the creator that's because of their sinful hearts that's Romans 1 therefore unless you know Jesus you don't get the world in the same way in 1 Corinthians 1 Corinthians what chapter is it actually I think I've got it here hang on chapter 1 verse 18 1 Corinthians chapter 1 18 and following Paul talk about how God's word is foolishness to those who aren't

Christians it just sounds foolish yet someone who's not a Christian to read the Bible this is ridiculous I don't get this even to Jews who have the Old Testament scriptures he says it's like they have got a veil over their eyes they can't see the truth of God's word because they don't have Jesus so you get it the word who became flesh who represents both the world and the word without him we don't get either he's the key to understanding both so particularly tonight if you're not a believer if you're not a Christian and you want to understand the world you want to see God in the world and you want to understand the word you want to see God in the word then get Jesus he's the key to both he's the key to both without him you get nothing so we would invite you tonight to come down the front here after the service we'll pray for you we'd invite you to join a community group learn more about who [26 : 49] Jesus is we invite you to keep coming along you're welcome here just as long as you like you'll hear about Jesus every week and we encourage you to trust him to follow him to understand what he's done for you and in doing so you'll understand God's world and you'll understand God's word we're going to pray for us okay and we're going to share we're going to sing we're going to share in God's provision to us in creation his bread and his wine remember what Jesus did for us okay so let's let's bow our heads Father thank you so much for this great psalm for many of us it's a real vindication of our love for creation we love creation because we love you we love creation because we love hearing from you through your creation thanks also for the reminder of how beautiful how sweet how beneficial how life giving your word is as well we love your word at this church

Lord I pray that we wouldn't merely observe it but we would hear from it and be changed by it our father I pray that as we go out this week this psalm would just keep playing through our minds and that it would keep reminding us to look up to look out to observe your world to hear you speaking through it and it and it would remind and encourage us to keep reading your word and have our faith nourished by it and finally Lord I just want to pray for my good friends here tonight who don't know Jesus as their king I pray that you would really enlighten their hearts so that they would love him Lord we love them and we love you and thank you for all that you've done for us and all that you're going to do we pray in Jesus name Amen