

The Speaking Heavens, Psalm 19

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[0 : 00] Psalm 19, as well as told you, is what we're looking at today. I hope you'll find it's very much worth looking at.

It's been, as you know, you sophisticated people here at Learners Exchange, it's been set to music, I believe, by Hayden, is that right? And the others have set it to music.

It's a glorious song, it's one of the splendors of the Psalter, for sure. And we receive it, we Christians, as God-read Scripture, as Paul calls it.

God-read. Other language which we recall is we read Scripture, we read, learn, and inwardly digest Scripture.

Or we might say we learn to breathe these writings. I like that metaphor, that picture. More to be desired than gold, and much fine gold.

[0 : 59] Sweeter also than honey from the honeycomb, says Psalm 19. All of which might mean that it's familiar, and in that there may be, obviously, isn't there a problem?

As we read, as we go through Psalm 19 today, we might therefore attempt to feel, if there's any strangeness here, to feel some strangeness in this song.

To benefit by making it unfamiliar. I've been grieving all my life, I've never stopped to think about it. Today we want to read the Scriptures and think about it.

Extreme things sometimes instruct. I love this anecdote that's currently true, told by a great Yale scholar, an author of a five-volume history of Christian doctrine, which I read many years ago, and I don't remember a word of it, Jaroslav Pelikan, the great scholar, he tells the story somewhere of Roman Catholic monks reporting their shock when first singing the Psalter in English after Vatican II.

Shocked at some of the words, some of the sentiments more specifically, that they had been singing but not comprehending in the old Latin. We see there that familiarity does sometimes obscure.

[2 : 22] There's an extreme example. Familiarity does do the same in us, I would think. We should think that if we're familiar with something, that may be obscuring it to some extent.

At least, familiarity will hide meaning sometimes and hide instruction from which we can benefit. Sometimes Scripture itself will challenge complacency in reading Scripture.

So before we pray, before we go right into Psalm 19, I want to just share with you a couple of examples of where Scripture challenges complacency. Jesus in dispute with Sadducees, number one.

Sadducees, you'll recall, only accepted the Pentateuch, the first five scrolls of Scripture. So, in at least one argument recorded in the Gospels, Jesus argues on their ground.

The Sadducees did not believe in life after death. Jesus quotes Scripture to them, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. So what, the Sadducees might have responded.

[3 : 30] Jesus then draws a conclusion from the text. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, says our Lord. I think it is a kind of presumption which keeps us from being somewhat disoriented by this interpretation ground.

What is Jesus saying here? Something like, a fullness of reading, our Lord seems to be saying to the Sadducees, a fullness of reading yields from, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a certainty of life post-mortem.

He is the God of the living. That is an implication from Scripture. Jesus is saying to the Sadducees, if you read Scripture properly, you would know this truth.

What a challenge that has to be for us. Are we reading Scripture and seeing what's there? What's there isn't necessarily on the surface. There you go.

Example number one. The other example is from our song today. A little bit less context here. None at all, really, because to supply it, we have to look at the entire Pauline worldview.

[4 : 41] God says, Paul, in giving, for now at least, the mystery of salvation to the Gentiles, you know, this kind of stuff that you read about in Romans 9, 10, 11.

Paul says, well, in this, has God been fair to Israel? Has Israel had a real opportunity to hear the gospel? And Paul answers, yes, they have.

And his text, which in some sense demonstrates this truth, is from Psalm 19. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, Paul says.

Quoting Psalm 19. Which in Psalm 19, we'll see today, is a poetic description of the heaven's mute testimony to the glory of their creator.

Paul says, hold your breath here. Paul says, by quoting this text, that it also means that when God speaks, it does not fail in its power, or in its justice, or in its extent.

[5 : 49] Imagine that. What a, what a, if I may put it this way, a use of scripture. All of which is to say that scripture teaches us to be humble in the presence of scripture.

It is written, means God is speaking. And our God is a consuming fire. And God will reveal a fullness, the fullness of the meaning of scripture in its time.

God is speaking. God is speaking. God is speaking. Which, you'll recall, is the title of this little meditation for today. And we should begin, just before we look at it, with a word of prayer.

What better way to pray when we're looking at Psalm 19 than to echo how it concludes. So, we pray these words.

Lord, may the words of us all today, all we think today, all we speak today, be acceptable in your sight. Our God, you who are our strength, our rod, you who are our redeemer.

[7 : 00] Amen. I hope everyone has Psalm 19 in front of them. I know we do. On one page. The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words. Their voice is not heard. Yet 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 forth 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 hid 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.

[8 : 09] The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are true. 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 and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned.

In keeping them there is great reward. But who can discern his errors? Clear thou me from hidden faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, and 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 thy sight. O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalm 19. There it is. This psalm obviously begins with a picture, doesn't it?

[9 : 14] A qualified picture of God speaking forth, maybe we could say, bodying forth knowledge of himself in the visible heavens. The heavens are telling.

The heavens are telling. Qualified again by the negation. That there isn't really any words to be heard. There are no words to be heard. The heavens are telling.

There is no voice, says the psalmist. That's his qualification. That's all straightforward stuff.

However, however, we should notice immediately, I think we should notice immediately, that there is a speaker present, one with words at his command.

And we heard them at the end of this psalm in our prayer this morning. May the words of my mouth be acceptable. Is it through us, I think it is, is it through us, by means of us, that the heavens find a voice?

The God of the psalmist paints the heavens, if you will, spreads it out for us. We might pause there and just think for a moment.

[10:30] God, we're told in this psalm, spreads out the heavens before us. Spreads out space. God, inhabiting no space necessarily, creates space.

Isn't that remarkable? God created the thing that we call space. Space is, the philosophers have a heyday, trying to define what space is.

But we could say for sure, space is the possibility of relationship. So in space, we see sun and moon, star systems without number, heavenly wonders, near and far.

We can dare to call some of them near. If you want some details, you just look into the action of that Hubble thing up in space. It shows wonders without end.

But humans paint, humans clothe it all, in the wonder of words. Scientists, I think, sometimes forget that. They sometimes clothe it in mathematical notation.

[11:37] But it's all clothed, clothed with the wonder of communication, especially in words. Things speaking on God's behalf by means of our speaking.

It's a remarkable idea. An idea obviously taken up by great poets, by great word artists. Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything, as you like it, by Will Shakespeare.

Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. The heavens are telling the glory of God.

The creative universe is speaking. All of that sounds okay, but we should note that the psalmist registers, doesn't he, a slight anxiety, just quietly present in this psalm.

A slight anxiety. Again, it comes from the end of the psalm. The psalmist says, may the words, these wonderful things which we clothe the heavens with to give them the appropriate praise due to the glory they reveal of the creator, may the words of my mouth be acceptable.

[13:02] There's anxiety in this psalmist. He's worried about something. Acceptable implies, I think we should say strongly implies, that some speaking may not be.

When Isaiah, we remember that all through Scripture this truth has taught to us. When Isaiah saw God, he said, I am a man of unclean lips.

Something has gone badly wrong with human speaking. Out of the same mouth come blessings and cursing that should not be so, says James the Apostle.

We should remind ourselves that it was not Troy that discovered or invented the simple idea that close attention to speech will instruct.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. We have it on the highest authority. Why, then, is our psalmist, despite his implied concern for his speech, why is he so confident in saying, the heavens are telling the glory of God?

[14:22] Answer. This answer is really my theme for the day, really. Our psalmist is not dependent on the resource called himself for his knowledge of God.

Nor are we. Our psalmist is not dependent on himself for his knowledge of God. Or, if we extrapolate from ourselves to God, we will end up with some conception of transcendence, certainly, but it will have little or nothing to do with the God witnessed you in Psalm 19.

How shall I think about God? This is from memory, says Calvin, as he famously opens his great institutes. He says to himself, well, shall I think about myself?

Hopefully, I think he implies that. Shall I deeply think about myself? Or does one just write off, if you will, think about God? Whence our knowledge about these things?

A few weeks back, a few months back, I guess it was now, you'll recall, Dr. Davenport was talking about Richard Dawkins and his book, *The God Delusions*.

[15:44] I wondered if I listened to Dr. Davenport, if I was alone on a desert island, Dr. Dawkins, that's a rather pathetic fantasy, isn't it?

If I could convince a man like Dr. Dawkins, his famous atheist, that God, if God is contested, see, Dr. Dawkins thinks he should be, could we at least agree on a statement like this?

God is an infinitely unique object of inquiry. Could we agree on a statement like that? God is an infinitely unique object of inquiry.

If he answered yes, I hope he would. I'd pose another question. I guess he gets suspicious at this point, but I was trying to trick him, and I have.

Is there something, and I must, that first question, I'm quite proud of it. Those are my words. If somebody else has said that, I'm glad he did. God is an infinitely unique object of inquiry.

[16:46] But the second question I learned from a, a professional American philosopher, George McRodis, George McRodis, he says, is there something that cannot be proved to anyone?

That's a, you know, philosophers are like that, aren't they? Is there something that cannot be proved to anyone? Or is there something which by its very nature cannot be proved to anyone? I think Dr. Dawkins, if I was him, I'd say, well, that probably means it just isn't there. But theists, that is, theists, you know, those who believe in God, and our psalmist is one of those, so are we all in this room, I take it, they believe that God is quite knowable, but in a very real sense, not provable. There is, if you will, this is, this will be over quickly for those of you who don't like this kind of thing. There is a kind of cognitive order to be known and observed.

At least in Psalm 19, the objectivities of the world, in this case, the heavens, and its intelligibility, the fact that he can just see them and know them in some measure, is enough for our psalmist.

[18:00] At some level, it's enough. It's not proof. It's almost as if deeply implied in Psalm 19 and the whole Bible, the question of God is too deep, too deep for proof.

God is not merely an object of inquiry. God is known in a kind of dynamic of knowing appropriate to God, to its object.

The God of Psalm 19 is not lost, will not be lost, in some vacuum of utter abstraction. He is present, says our psalmist, in glory.

He is present. How can you prove something that's already present? He's present in glory. The very heavens speak of this, says our psalmist.

We are preachers, and we are asked by this psalm to say yes to this. The heavens are telling the glory of God.

[19:04] Are you listening, is the implied question here. Are you listening? Our God is speaking all the time. The heavens declare his glory.

I would think that this is the most that Israel will do in the direction of arguing for God's existence. And I suspect it may not be even that.

It may be that these words should be understood strictly and happily as a celebration of God. It may be a celebration of God. It's not really an argument of any kind.

Why should we believe that God is not lost in a vacuum of abstraction? And to this very important question our psalmist now turns.

He says, doesn't he, that in these heavens, at the end of verse 4, and on in the 5, in them, these heavens, he has sent a tent for the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom leaping his chamber, like a strong man runs his course with joy, rises from the end of the heavens and encircles the end of them, there's nothing hidden from its heat.

[20:20] In these heavens, the creator, said as the psalmist, has set the sun. There's a magnificent simplicity with this poem, isn't there? It's on the surface so obvious.

In the heavens, the creator has set the sun, the greater light that rules the day as the sun is called from scripture. The sun's daily course is celebrated, and it's likened to a bridegroom running his course with joy.

A man's wedding day in the ancient Middle East must have been somewhat strenuous. Rejoicing, rejoicing to run his course. What a statement about the sun. Just an aside here, while we're on these kind of things, the Bible rarely shows, I think we can put it this way, it's cosmological hand. It speaks phenomenologically, that is, the Bible describes what the eyes see, just as we do. The sun rises in the morning, if we believe that by faith today.

The sun rises, the sun sets. No claim further than that is a surge about the heavens. Our passage does sound, however, doesn't it, Middle Eastern, or perhaps reflects those familiar with desert.

[21:36] When we hear the psalmist saying, nothing is hid from the heat of the sun as it travels through the heavens. Our poet knows what it is to seek shade from a molten heat-drenching sun.

Another aside here, I've found this interesting. It is at the middle of verse 5, like a strong man runs its course with joy. I think it's a King James that's a giant.

According to C.S. Lewis in his Oxford History of English Literature, it might have been, the translators had the option and toyed with it, the authorized translators annoyed with a knight, as in a men of evil knight, going up to do battle.

So it was in some pre-Reformation writings. But they went with this imagery in our classic translations. You see here that our poet has a strategy.

The poet has planted a simple picture in our minds. It might be called a picture of completeness or thoroughness. The heavens telling the glory of God, he says right off the bat.

[22 : 49] It pours forth speech, he says, day to day, night to night. You cannot hide from such a witness. Likewise, we've been told the sun without fail every day fills the world with light.

It is a relentless presence. Nothing is hid from its presence. There it is. There's what he's told us so far.

What an overture of sorts this is. What a setting. glory of the heavens. The sun in the heavens. And then we should ask ourselves, with this kind of setting, with this kind of overture, could anything live up to such a stage, to such a setting, in the musical metaphor, to such an overture?

And our scripture, Psalm 19, our poet says, yes. On this stage, something is worthy to stand for it.

[24 : 00] Does it surprise us? I think it should. We have become too familiar with Psalm 19. I've become too familiar with Psalm 19, if I'm not surprised.

What can stand in this setting? The glory of the sky. The glory of this mighty sun that lives in the sky every day. What may stand, if you will, in this setting, is there it is in verse 7.

The law of the Lord. Are you shocked? Are you amazed? Do you want to cry out in celebration?

Yes, I know something of this. Something of this is appropriate to my spiritual sensibility. The law of the Lord. The heavens and the sun, they're a setting for the law of the Lord.

Then, we turn now to more of the song. What a law. The law of the Lord, verse 7, the law of the Lord is perfect.

[25 : 12] The law of the Lord is perfect. Soon, we're going to move on and the poet will celebrate the law and we'll look at it for a bit. But we shouldn't forget that overture.

We shouldn't forget the setting just now. Like the heavens, it is implied. Like the heavens, the law is perfect. It's just there.

It's faithful. It's beautiful. I would like to think, this may be my over-reading of it, but I think it's there. I'm going to justify over-reading of it. I would like to think that it sort of implies that the law, like the heavens, is out of our reach, but calling us heavenward.

Also, of course, like the sun, the law illuminates us. It illuminates everything everywhere. What a law.

[26 : 14] The law of the Lord. The law of the Lord, we're told, revives the soul. Verse 7. The other day, it was in January, I was watching a friend's dog, a golden retriever, in a little park near the yacht club.

You've probably been there up in Point Dray. I'm not asking for my permission at all. An eagle, there's two eagles, I inquired about this, there's two eagles that live in a tree in this little park.

An eagle swept through this not very large park. Its wings fully extended. And it was just magnificent. It sort of blocked out your view.

Eagles are so big. You know, it reminded me of, I will renew your youth like the eagle. This eagle is what a picture of life.

I felt kind of, I'm in the way, okay, I'll leave the park, no problem. Leave me and go to the wall. Not mine. I will renew your youth like the eagles.

[27 : 13] The creator created these things, the heavens and eagles. He created these things and with these things, these images are for our benefit. We're to meditate on the heavens.

Meditate on things like eagles because the Lord tells us to meditate on them. The law revives. It gives new life to souls. Souls just like ours.

We can mount up with wings like eagles all because of the law's presence and our attention to it. Psalm 19, take a step back here, begins with a speaking heaven.

Very strange picture. Beautiful. It concludes, we heard, in our prayer today and as we read it, it concludes with the psalmist taking thought about his own speaking.

But now, in the psalm's middle, we hear about a speaking law. The law, we're told, is a testimony. The law is precept.

[28 : 22] Here is a commandment. Very movingly, it seems to me, the law is a fear. Here the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The fear. The law is an ordinance, right at the bottom of the screen. Law is an ordinance. You have to think, don't you, when you read Psalm 19, it has to remind you of Psalm 119, all of these different aspects of the law.

The law, it seems to me, is, I'm looking for my own metaphors, the law is a diamond. It's lover wishes the skill of a diamond cutter, able to see every reflected glory in its every part. Every little part of it, if you will, brings life. Perhaps even the glory of the heavenly one shines here. This celebration of the law obviously speaks for itself, but it's worth, at least to some extent, dissecting it.

On the right hand, in English, on the right hand, what words you have there, just notice them, there's perfect. Let your eye go down that right hand side, you'll pick these up.

[29 : 42] Perfect. The law is perfect. The law is sure. The law is right. The law is pure. The law is clean.

The law is true. Remember, Paul is looking, he says, whatsoever things are excellent, think on these things. Imagine something called sure and right, pure, clean, true.

Perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true. What a resume. On the other side, on the left hand side, less obvious, go down, let your eye go down the left hand side with these words.

We hear about the law reviving, making wise, the law rejoicing the heart, the law enlightening, the law enduring, the law righteous altogether.

How much, how more could you celebrate? This is the law. Perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true, reviving, making wise, rejoicing the heart, enlightening, enduring, righteous altogether.

[30 : 59] It's like candles on a cake. The law sort of blazes with beauty. You don't want to count this, this is too many. Beautiful stuff.

And all of this praise, it's almost mesmerizing, I find, is held together by a relentless repetition. For some reason, I have never seen this before.

I looked at it the last few days over and over again. There's a repetition that holds these two sides of praise together.

Have you noticed it? It's, again, six times we hear the law of the Lord is perfect, the testimony of the Lord, precepts of the Lord, commandment of the Lord, fear of the Lord, ordinances of the Lord.

Amazing words. The heavens, the heavens are of the Lord, the sun in the heavens is of the Lord, and the law is of the Lord. It all hangs together. The heavens are his, the law is his, we are his, everything is his.

[32 : 11] The sun and the moon, everything is of the Lord. verse 10, verse 10, is very familiar, isn't it?

Very, very, very familiar. More to be desired, laid in gold, and over the earth, even much fine gold. After all that praise, what else can he say? Sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb.

Very well known words. Like the late American economist, he died just a while ago, didn't he? John Kenneth Galbraith, which found this amusing. He quotes a, I guess you call it a proverb, presumably popular with a common of a dismal sign.

He says, he says, if you see a Swiss banker jump out of a high window, follow him, he will land in money. Which is my way of saying that I know, we might jump out of a high window after a Swiss banker, knowing their way of money.

We desire gold. I desire it, but we all do. We desire much of it, much gold. Our senses love the sweet.

[33 : 32] We want these things. We want the security of gold. We want security, and in the midst of security, we want pleasure. But all of that, the law contains, our psalmist says.

Do we really believe that? In reading Holy Scripture prayerfully, perhaps on our knees, making it the chief love of our lives, that is much better than lots of gold, lots better than lots of pleasure.

Do you believe that? this psalmist says it's the truth. It's an eternal truth that you can start finding out about now. This is better than gold, all the security it can deliver to you.

It is better than all the pleasure your senses could ever take in. The law of the Lord is worth everything. Seek it out.

We've been told this from other places, haven't we? It's like treasure hidden in a field, more to be desired than gold and much fine gold, sweeter than the honeycomb.

[34 : 45] It speaks for itself. Do we believe this? 11, 12, and 13 are extremely interesting in this context, I think.

For over by them, these things in the law which are to be treasured, by them is thy servant warned, in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can discern his errors? Clear thou me from hidden faults, keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

The praise of the Lord that we've just heard of is also very rich, if I may put it that way. Does the psalmist sense here that it might make us almost giddy or a bit lated?

We'll merely praise it and enjoy the praising rather than the reality that the praise praises, if you will. I find verses 11, 12, and 13 are quite sobering.

[35 : 54] As we just heard them, notice the words again. Who can discern error? He speaks of hidden faults, of presumptuous sins, of great transgression.

What a change of pace here. Error, hidden faults, presumptuous sins, great transgression. It appears as if, more than appears as if, our psalmist knows a shuddering truth.

Tell me if that's an overstatement. He knows a shuddering truth. It is more than merely sobering.

The law which he has just celebrated in such high terms, the law reveals, just like the heavenly son, what lies hidden.

He comes down to earth. The law reveals, the law which he loves, which he treasures more than gold, which he urges us to treasure more than gold, worth more than all the pleasure in the world. When you get to know it, it will reveal you to yourself, like the sun revealing a place on the earth in the morning. It reveals what lies hidden in us.

[37 : 16] Again, the law of all to be desired in gold will seek us out. But you can go right to a happy conclusion about this. The divine surgeon, if you will, who gives the law, he only wounds you to heal you.

The Bible, which must be read as a whole, follows through this truth relentlessly, doesn't it? When we talked about Romans a few weeks back, we heard Paul say, Paul who loved the law, never to his dying day did he stop loving the law.

He realized that the law which he loved revealed him to himself so clearly that he finally had to say, oh, wretched man, about him. The law promised life.

It delivered death. There it is. It's a blunt instrument, if you will, in one sense. Dostoyevsky's great novel, *The Underground Man*, you see their display, don't you, and that most people in the room are familiar with this great classic.

You see there a man of great transgression, like our psalmist speaks of. His life is the life hardly worth living, this underground man.

[38 : 32] But grace reaches him in the person of a woman who has loved him. Because she loves him, she speaks to him the truth.

You remember the underground man, by Dostoyevsky, this woman who loves this wretched great transgressor, she says to him, you are a murderer.

She loves the underground man, she loves this great transgressor, and because she loves him, she speaks the truth to him. the law of God will speak the truth, and we need to hear it.

It might, hopefully it has, often, kept us from great transgression. The law has a power of salt and life in the world that keeps the world as sane as it is, and keeps the world from its greatest transgressions.

We can thank the law for that. But it does reveal the law that we are capable, oh, easily capable of great transgression. If we don't know that about ourselves, we don't know much about ourselves.

[39 : 49] The song concludes, doesn't it? Again, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Our psalmists here, don't let these words just go by, they're prayed so often from pulpits and other places. These are hyper-familiar rules. Our psalmist firmly plants himself in the great biblical narrative, if you will.

God is our rock, mentioned right at the end of this psalm. The rock which accompanied and sheltered in a sense Israel in the desert. God, my redeemer, the psalm ends.

God, my redeemer. Israel and Egypt was redeemed out of her slavery. It's pure Israel narrative that's invoked here. The psalmist knows who he is.

This psalm therefore is no fragment. It is a little biblical theology. God is the creator. God is the sustainer of the creation.

[40 : 55] That's why he puts that sun up there, make things grow. This God has revealed himself to Israel. The law, the law is given to Israel. God is a rock.

God is strength. God is a redeemer of slavery. That's the whole Bible. Fill in the blank. But more than that, without this mystery revealed, everything else does become a fragment.

The Bible and Psalm 19 do not live. We draw to a conclusion of this little talk. The Bible and Psalm 19 do not live within possibilities, even religious possibilities, allowed by modernity, or allowed by somebody's rationalism, or allowed by religious studies, or allowed by people who like to study comparative religion, allowed by semi-believing bishops.

Israel never did theology. It was too early. But after the mystery of Jesus, theology appears.

Theology happens. The whole counsel of God is now before us.

The creator walked among us. He was rejected, but he absorbed the rejection in his forgiving love.

The words of his mouth were perfect. They revived the soul.

[42 : 19] His words created the heavens. He is the rock with Israel in the desert. So teaches the mighty apostle to the Gentiles. He is the redeemer.

He fulfills the mystery of redemption revealed to Israel. All things, all of life, the whole cosmos, have their possibility in him.

That's the confession of the gospel. Jesus the rock, he's the redeemer. All things have their possibility in him.

of course, this song has been set to music. The saints, the church, senses here the whole story when it's read a light, when it's read a right.

P.S. to the conclusion as we draw to a close. If there is a complacency which saw 19 challenges, and I have felt this as I've been reading it recently, it might be the complacency which gives rise to what you might call an unthinking worship of God.

[43 : 30] Psalm 19 calls us to an intelligent adoration of our creator. I think that's what I would want to say about Psalm 19 today.

It calls us to an intelligent adoration of our creator and of our redeemer. What a story he tells us about what he's doing to save us and the world.

Creator, lawgiver, bringer of redemption. The world's true story. It's all there in Psalm 19.

You've read it right. I thank you. Thanks to God. Let's say a word of prayer. Lord, we thank you for this mighty word of your mighty scriptures.

And may we become mighty in the scriptures because they are great. They are perfect. They revive us. They tell us where the world is going.

[44 : 30] They tell us about salvation. They tell us about the future. Nothing is hidden from them. They expose all things. Lord, give us life in your word.

We pray this in the name of the living word of Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Don't disappear into the piano there when I ask you or mention this. But here we have this poem that's written by a highly gifted individual David.

As well as being savage in certain other ways. When you were studying it, did you contemplate anything about this poem that was messianic?

Is it possible that, say, a young Jesus would pray such a prayer, who know that Jesus was free from that, and we know that he was free from hidden faults, and we know that he was free from presumptuous sins, and he was blameless and innocent. That was the quality of the blood that he offered, innocent and blameless.

[46 : 11] But, for Jesus to keep himself, he had to be, he was tempted on all counts, wasn't he, Jesus? So he had to contemplate presumptuous sins, he had to contemplate hidden faults, he had to do that to keep himself blameless and innocent throughout his whole life.

Did any of that occur to you when you were studying this? That it may be in some sense messianic? That is the prayer of a king.

Jesus was a king, David was a king. It's a prayer of someone that that has great responsibilities and wanted to do it, wanted to be a righteous king.

So, did it strike you that any of this would be messianic? Only in the sense that I think all of the Old Testament is messianic in the broadest sense.

There's no, you know, there's intensification of the messianic, but in one sense, the whole trajectory of the Old Testament so efficiently is pointing at Jesus.

[47 : 41] The temple is messianic, if you will. Jesus fulfilled the mystery about the temple was above. So, and only in that sense. I was more than struck, even last evening, I had this done, last evening just casually, I picked up a book by David Lyle Jeffery.

He's written a beautiful book on people of the book. It's called, very scholarly book. And he unfolds how St. Augustine took Psalm 19 and just ran with it.

You know, just, he just, he did, I think, really an insightful allegorizing with it. Psalm 19 has been treasured by the church and thought to teach, teach her much about the ways of God.

And Paul's use of it is striking in Romans. Almost shocking to some people. It seems like a jarring, ripping out of one context we use in a totally different

context. But it just shows that the scriptures in their fullness can be, can challenge our complacency.

[48 : 53] Very much so. That's why I love that story about Jesus in the Sadness. He says, if you read that right, it means life after death. Hey, they must have gone away thinking.

He's a dreamer. We don't have to read it that way. Okay. So what is the fullness of reading?

Augustine takes the idea of the heavens are like velo and the scriptures are written on them.

And God protects us in a sense from his, his obliquity with the scriptures. And then we get prepared for meeting him because he goes to the tablets. He loves Psalm 19. I know that doesn't.

I don't like it as just merely proof text. You know, Jesus sort of wrote this and so that fulfills that.

That's, that's a bit straight. I never enjoy that kind of thing. But, I don't like proof text.

I don't like many Christians, do you? Yes, Jack? I don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it. I even made a statement that there was a lot of cosmological truth to that here.

[49 : 57] And brought by even the reading of it suggests that there might be but I'm quite prepared to be wrong. But I found that it seems to me it's one of those little nuggets of science hidden in the scriptures that we find throughout scriptures that suggests the true author to wait more than the human author because it talks about the heavens telling the Lord of God and two verses later it says there's no speech or sound.

Well, guess what? The heavens, if you look up in the heavens and you speak, you're in a vacuum. It doesn't get hurt. Right? Sound does not transmit through a vacuum but on earth it does. So, I kind of work to think that there might have been some cosmological significance there too.

Would you agree that you're free to believe that? Yes, sir. Yeah. I'm free to believe that. But making it publicly acceptable would be a lot of work.

Not how we're in a world. Oh, okay. That's your private whimsy about some of the people. You know, there's the story of Cardinal Newman. Roman priests in some circumstances, blessed them, used to do the mass very quickly because they had a lot of masses to do on a given day.

Maybe they were in honor of so many saints or so many people. So, the justification from that was Jesus to Judas. What thou do is do quickly. You know, that's why a Catholic evangelical sensibility just has to be developed about Scripture.

[51 : 32] You just have to do it. You can't just go and learn how to learn how it's done. There's no set of ABC. Read this way. It's a sensibility that grows up over centuries and the church is learning it all the time.

And we learn it from people like Augustine and the authors and the reformers. We're on the receiving end of the sensibility. When does allegory just become silly?

And when is it a deep alignment with the texture of it all? Paul says, do you see, my readers in Rome, that Israel has not been treated unfairly?

The gospel appears to have left the setting in which it was promised. Paul is almost human speaking obsessed by this. Why are my own people rejecting the Messiah?

He says, And then he answers his own question, has God been fair? He says, well yes, Psalm 19 says that the voice goes out into all the earth. That's not what this psalm is talking about.

[52 : 40] But Paul sees a fullness of meaning there that God's word is always fair, always goes where it's supposed to go. It's never subject to man's judgment. That's amazing.

It seems to be ripped. But Paul says, no, there's a sensibility. He says, read it correctly. It's like Jesus, no, no, if God is the God of Abraham, I was seeing Jacob, then they're in God's presence. the Sadducees always said, you know, like real rabble, come on, you're doing it, sir.

Is it more to the word result to a sense than, say, deliver to God's defying sins? sin? Yes. What do you think? Do you have a sentence?

Well, I don't want to ask you. I think one commentator, sorry, helpful here, as I recall, not sure which, the idea of presumptuous sin is something that becomes habitual and makes you an enemy of God.

[53 : 52] Yes, what? You become an enemy of God because of this sin. God says to you, because of that sin of your life, you and I can consider ourselves enemies, and I'll win in any battle with you.

Just watch. I mean, that's really a serious presumption. Sitting with a high hand, it's called, in other places, where God says, I will confront you with this.

This is not a moment of impatience at a stoplight. This is something that makes us headed for a collision. You don't, I remember hearing that you preach and I said, you don't want that God is your enemy.

He reveals that he doesn't come to your enemy. The living God you're buying is not too far off the mark. Yeah, I think so. Presumptuous sin. Just go ahead and live as my want.

I haven't read Augustine's allegory, as you mentioned about this, but I like the metaphors that are revealed in this. between, well, let's say the first eight verses anyway, because I think that consciously, or maybe even unconsciously, if you want to comment on that, the psalmist is trying to make cosmic truth something that people can understand by comparing the firmament to us, and also comparing the law to us.

[55 : 17] And we're used to poets doing it the other way around, you know, where my love is like a red, red rose. There's a very common place, Scottish, poem, you know, and you take out of nature what you want to take into yourself.

This is the reverse. It's taking the firmament into man. For instance, in the second verse, it talks about the firmament having speech.

speech. Well, you know, we also sometimes talk about the music of the spheres. But, you know, is it really noisy up there? I mean, Jack is saying it can't travel in the vacuum.

So, here we are trying to get this down to something that is humanly familiar, speech and words and voice. And then he talks about the son coming out of his tent and is comparing him with a man coming out of his bridal chamber, or a person who's going to run a race.

And then when we get to the law, all of these examples are human ones. The soul, wisdom, we can read that mind if we want, the heart, the eyes.

[56 : 30] And it seems to me that he's trying to put these really global or cosmic ideas into something that we can relate to ourselves in a much more personal way, which would be that he did that or I don't know the allegory side of this.

I had to be there. That sounds good stuff. I read it as, if you need this metaphor, as he's building a great theater, a theater that we live in, and I'm putting in the middle of it, the mystery, the glory of the law.

That would be mine. It's an overshare. I'll tell you about the heavens and their magnificence. And then I'll tell you about the sun in the heaven. It's sort of the dominant sphere.

And then he says, ah, the law of the Lord is approved. This is the supreme glory. God of the sin. There's a great overstatement, famous overstatement of Karl Barth.

Why did God create the world? He created the world so that he could enter into a covenant in Israel. Barth. So there's some truth in that.

[57 : 47] There's some greatness of his decision and grace to reach out to man in the creation and to bring him back to himself. And in doing that, bringing the creation, God, as Paul says we want to take.

It's a great picture, isn't it? I do feel the great thing about Psalm 19 is the serpent might just kind of dwelling, chewing on metaphors and living with them. And I find it a bit helpful, isn't it?

That's why I found the ego picture helpful. These pictures are given to us for a reason, I think, which is a dwell upon it. Find life in them.

You think about C.S. Lewis once said that Tolkien, when he looked at the stars, he thought they were elfish. Reminded him of a glory that was strange, that man's destiny was somehow to know them.

And I guess, the stars are the gems woven into the hem of an archangel's robe, C.S. Lewis' philosopher friend also taught us it. But he didn't say no that.

[58 : 54] But they might be. don't know what they are. They're there for a reason. Why did God create the heaven? Why is it what Hubble is now showing us?

Why did God do that? He's sort of waiting for man's knowledge to increase. He says, wait to what I've got to show you now. It's a sense of it.

He keeps speaking to man. Heaven's a terrible way. God keeps being fair to us. He keeps talking to him. And Jack doesn't know. Angelic voices might carry out there.

I just thought of that. Jack, you've got more words. You've got to work out to me. Please, sir.

There's a poem I'm reminded of called The Extravagance of God.

And in it there's a line that says about he puts rainbows on the domes and deep sea shells but only he can see it in fire.

[59 : 55] And sometimes it's just because he's extravagant. Beautiful. Beautiful. Beautiful.

Apparently, medieval craftsmen put beautiful little gardens in totally hidden places in the deep.

apparently they give glory to God. More than sea of God. We can do an answer. Yes?

I feel like a preacher. I see that answer. I just wanted to thank you for giving a new vision to this psalm.

I think from my background in the reform tradition I've always seen it as a kind of dangerous psalm. because it gives a little too much to general revelation or common revelation from the tall end.

I hear you. But you've really shown the psalm in itself and as a celebration of the story of our curriculum has shown it.

[61 : 00] Thank you for that comment. It just underlines for me. in the book of you've read it.

In the book of the commentaries there's at least hilarity there. In that my Oxford Study Bible some probably maybe a committee did. Oh well the first six verses are obviously pagan and then some Israel guy came along and said well we better make this down he read it so they added some stuff about the law.

That is so stupid. I remember Lewis wasn't talking about this but Lewis talked about as a literary thing as a man immersed in western history's greatest literature.

Of course he says it's a holy son it's a natural picture a natural transition into law. It's so natural so all of it. But a commentator can miss it.

I think that's the vanity. People want to say something that sounds sophisticated. It's Hebraic. Truly true. Norm. It's interesting to me the idea often in the songs the poet is crying out for justice and crying out for the law and when Christ encountered people who said I have kept the law and in the Sermon on the Mount he was very careful to point out that in a certain way the law is too perfect for you to keep.

[62 : 34] The idea of having to be hidden from the effect of that bright sun. I like your idea of that desert understanding. but it's really interesting to me that it's almost the same as the way that the Sermon on the Mount talks about the meek, the poor, and hard that they run to protection from that law.

The law is perfect. It revives. It takes that person who is beaten down and that's where the real justice is going to come.

We cry for justice but it's a very warped sense, our own twisted sense of what we have in mind that is justice. Whereas this one is going on and saying, you know, the law of the Lord is perfect.

What does that perfection do? It revives the soul and it I really like this way that you did comparing the right-hand column and the left-hand column because it answers our deepest and deepest longings.

And it's where we rush around to refuge. What the liberals will tell us is that this warped understanding of living under law all needs to be scrapped.

[64 : 00] We need to have this other, you know, they claim that supposedly Jesus came to be all accepting and all embracing. And instead of saying, no, where do you run to for your protection, then that embracing of that loving God is right straight to the law.

And there's several chariots there. Yeah. Well, that's... Yeah, the myth of the law is full, doesn't it, in the Bible? I like what one person puts it.

The law comes to us and says, here's what you should be, here's what you are. And so it necessarily creates the divine itself, oh, wretched man that I am.

Paul puts it perfectly, oh, wretched man. I have much to say that this has been a real revelation for me today to come here.

And that this was a song that was given to me that I was confirmed. So it was in the park, and I've been thinking about this, and you must explain it for me. So thank you for opening up.

[65 : 15] Good afternoon. Good afternoon.