

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God!■

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 October 2010

Preacher: Chris Jones

[0 : 00] And good day everybody, let's bow our heads to our praying. Heavenly Father, by your spirit and through your words, speak to us right now and please be changing and transforming our thoughts and our attitudes and our beliefs to be in accordance with yours and in accordance with what is true, that we would be changed and transformed.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen. How would you rate yourself if you applied consumer standards to how you worship God?

So, you know, if your car starts two out of three, do you go back to the dealer and say, that's okay? Or if your refrigerator works for a day or two or stops working for a day or two every once in a while, would you think, well, it works most of the time, it'll do?

Or my iPhone locks up every couple of hours but it works all the rest of the time, then I'm happy with that. Yes? Or the water heater delivers an icy cold shower every now and then, is it dependable?

If you miss a couple of loan payments every 12 months, do the bank say to you, well, 10 out of 12 ain't bad. So, if you read your Bible once a month, if you come to church when you feel like it, if you won't meet in a small group because you don't like the people in it, if you're always grumbling about brothers and sisters not meeting your standards, if you're always expecting to be served and never serve, what's that say about you?

[1 : 36] Not other people, you and for me, what's it say about me when I do those things? Now, don't take that as a guilt trip, just say it as a thoughtful challenge and I'll now tell you that that was a very unfair thing for a preacher to do.

Do you know why? Because we are always faulty, aren't we? And we are not perfect except through the grace of Christ, so I don't want to press it too far.

We don't become part of God's family by measuring up to a set of performance standards. We are here by the grace and mercy of Christ, but the way we live does reflect our view of God and ourselves and that's a bit why I've used it just now, because in a sense our lives are a practical demonstration of what Christ means to us.

And I think a lot of the time, and this is true for me and it probably is true for you in some measure, our lives project an inadequate view of God and his majesty.

This is the third message in a row. We didn't plan a preaching series, this is something that God has stitched together. But it's a third message in a row where the glory of God has been on display in the Bible passages which we have been preaching.

[2 : 52] So two weeks ago Steve preached to us from Isaiah 6, one week ago I think Sam spoke to us from Psalm 8, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.

And then having said that, said, and what are people that you even take notice of them and regard them? And today, tonight, I come to Psalm 19.

And this is a psalm that C.S. Lewis, the great writer, described as the greatest poem in the Psalms and one of the greatest lyrics in the world. I'm going to read from there. Psalm 19, verse 1, fantastic if you're following your Bibles as I speak.

The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech, night after night they display knowledge.

There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard, their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run its course.

[4 : 07] It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. So the writer looks up into the daytime sky, and he looks up into the nighttime sky, and he says, wow, it speaks.

And it's telling us how glorious God is. The heavens declare the glory of God, the sky proclaims the work of his hands.

And then in verse 2, day after day, they pour forth speech, night after night they display knowledge. The heavens are always speaking, they never stop.

The only time you don't see them speaking is when the cloud goes over. And they are speaking every day, and they are speaking every night, and they never stop telling us that God is glorious. And he says to us, there's no speech, there's no language, there's nowhere on the earth that their voice is not heard. Every person on the earth hears the same message in every place and in every language.

[5 : 20] And we're being told how glorious God is. They tell us what an extraordinary creator we have. He's an artist. The universe is his canvas.

Every person on the planet lives in his gallery. So every man, every woman, every child has an opportunity to be blown away by his artistry. And he uses this daytime illustration.

It's a wonderful illustration. The sun coming up in the morning, rising out of his tent, coming out like the champion, ready to do battle. And he marches across the heavens. Boom, boom, boom.

And he puts his heat on everyone. I don't see many sunrises, to be honest. But I did see a magnificent sunrise a couple of years ago.

We were on holidays on the central coast. And I think Gary and I woke up early in the dark. And I said, oh, it must be nearly sunrise. Let's go and sit on the sand dune. And we went and sat on the sand dune.

[6 : 16] And it's like waiting for a great performance to begin. You see the horizon begins to lighten. And it seems like it's just about to happen.

And the suspense is growing. A bit like Giant Jenga. The suspense is growing and growing and growing. And you think it must be there. And then suddenly the golden crown comes across the horizon.

And the sun marches up at speed. You watch it growing and growing and growing over the horizon before it gets set and comes. And it is the most magnificent display.

And do you know what? That happens every day. I've got to tell you. Some people pick a passage like this and they say, oh, the Bible's so out of date and unsophisticated.

The sun doesn't go round the earth. The earth goes round the sun. Duh. And I as the preacher want to say, you're not fair.

[7 : 19] That's so unfair. This is written 3,000 years ago before we had telescopes and Copernicus and everybody. And the person who wrote this down has used the most magnificent poetry to describe this awesome event which happens every day.

He's blown away by the wonder of creation. And I think we have to be really, really careful with all our sophistication and our science that we lose the wonder.

Oh, yeah, we know it goes. The earth goes round the sun. It's held in elliptical order by the Jupiter out there and all the rest. I mean, we just lose it. It's true, but we lose the wonder.

I can think of another moment of wonder. Who's had the last little baby? Annabelle, is she the last one out? Well, just checking.

Isn't there something wondrous about that moment? I mean, we could stand there. We could have the medicos out the front and they could tell us about how it all happens. But you've got to be there in the moment to appreciate just how wonderful this is.

[8 : 28] It's cool. And I've been there five times. I can tell you it's really wonderful. Kerry might say differently.

No, I think she'll say it's really wonderful, but it was really easy for you. Okay? I love being in the bush. And clear, moonless night. That's the other picture that's here in Psalm 19.

Clear, moonless night. You gaze into the heavens. My son Andrew went on an excursion to the Warren Bungles, which wasn't far from where we lived at Wee War. And they went to the planetarium. And he came back with all this knowledge that I've never had before about which constellations and galaxies are out there and what you can see.

And he got me to take him out of town. And we went out to somebody's property. And we were way away from town. We were way away from the house. We turned off the lights. There was no moon. Pitch black. We looked up into the heavens. And the sky just comes alive. You see that many stars. And you just go, wow. And I know what I did with him.

[9 : 29] He stood there and he said to me, Dad, that's the serpent over there on the horizon. See the stars? And that's Scorpio up there. And I'm going, boy, I wish I could remember what he's remembered. But he could see things that I couldn't even see.

And it was just fantastic to have them shown to me. You don't see stars like that in Sydney. But the enormity and the vastness of the universe stirred me.

We stood there. We prayed. And we gave God thanks and the glory for what he has made. We could look at those things and say, thank you, God.

You are awesome. You are creator. You are magnificent in what you have brought into being. And you allow us to share in that. So for us, the glory of the heavens told us about the glory of God. They told us about the majesty of our creator. Psalm 19 says to us that every person on the planet hears the same message. Every person, every language spoken to in exactly the same way, the heavens are declaring the glory of God.

[10 : 31] If everybody could understand in our church family my message tonight, we would not have Chinese, Cantonese and Mandarin congregations. We would all be building a bigger building and we'd be in the one place and we'd be brothers and sisters in Christ understanding one another.

But Psalm 19 speaks in a universal language which is heard by everyone. Romans chapter 10 verse 19, no, Romans chapter 10 verse 18 quotes Psalm 19.

And it applies Psalm 19 to what people hear. And the context is that God has something to say, but not everybody's obedient to it.

So in Romans, Paul goes back and he grabs Psalm 19 and he says, but I asked, 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. The heavens are speaking. They are declaring God's glory. But just because something's said doesn't mean it's heard or acted on.

[11 : 39] So mum and dad and mum says, dinner's ready. Why do you laugh? Because you do what I do sometimes. The message goes out and it's not responded to, is it?

And I had the silly occasion the other week I came in as the family was finishing dinner and I said, I didn't even know you'd started. But there you go. The ancient Greeks and Romans heard the heavens speak and they turned them into gods.

The Darwinian evolutionist hears the heavens speak and praises the random forces of nature for what they've achieved.

Isn't that a nonsense? I think it's very human to be thrilled by the wonder of creation. I think every greenie does it, don't they?

They look at it and they just say, this is so magnificent. Look at how it all fits together. Everybody who's been to the US that I know and sees the Grand Canyon, I haven't seen it yet, just goes, wow.

[12 : 47] Or to Nepal or North India and sees the Himalayas. They're blown away by what they see. But just because you see something that makes you go, wow, doesn't mean that you give glory to our maker.

And the Bible tells us that we're going to be held accountable for what we've heard. Romans 1, verse 18, that the anger of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them. Because God's made it 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.

Psalmist stands in awe of the silent heavens and he hears them saying, God is glorious. And he gives glory and honour and praise to the unseen God who has made them.

The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands. The writer doesn't personalise God at this stage.

[14 : 12] He actually uses a very general name for God. It's L, E-L. We sometimes sing a song like El Shaddai. It means God Almighty.

The L part just means God. And sometimes in the Bible, in the Old Testament, it's even used for other gods, not even the true God, just God. The creation speaks.

Yes, it declares a glorious God. But the next part of the psalm says that God himself speaks. And God is a God who reveals himself in words.

So verse 7. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure and enduring forever.

[15 : 21] The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

Now this time he actually changes the word he uses for God. And I think Sam talked about this last week, but he said he uses the word Yahweh, the Lord. He uses the special name of God which was revealed to Moses in the Old Testament.

And the Lord isn't somebody who is merely out there in the heavens and standing aloof and all remote. He has come very close to people and his people know him personally. They know his name.

He's revealed himself to them in words and in actions. God has reached down to us. And it's why Christian faith, I hate it when it's even referred to as a religion, Christianity as a religion.

This is not religion. This is relationship with the living God of the universe. See, religion is about reaching up to God and trying to grab hold of God, whatever he might look like or however he might be, trying to keep God's happy.

[16 : 28] Some of the nations that God threw out of Israel were nations that worshipped by burning their kids in fire so that they'd make their God happy.

They wanted their gods to make their lives easy, to protect them from flood and drought and sickness and disease and give them a crop, give them an income. And it's almost like our prayers become sometimes, Lord, just give us what we want, give us what we need, rather than actually seeing who he is and his glory and seeing that he's the one who's actually reached down to us, that we don't have to make him happy because he's taken the initiative to bring us into relationship with him.

The law of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the precepts of the Lord, the commands of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, the ordinances of the Lord. It's all the things that we find in the scriptures, the Old Testament in particular, are the people of God in the Old Testament relating through the law, the scriptures given through Moses.

What God gave his people was the information that they needed to relate to him in a right way. His laws reveal his character. The majesty of God is revealed in his word.

He is very good to his people. The New Testament takes us even further and tells us even more about what God has done. John 1, verse 14, where we were a minute ago.

[17 : 57] The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Christ has stepped into the world, left his throne in heaven, left his Father and come amongst us and revealed the glory of God to us in his own person.

Hebrews 1, verse 1, In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the universe. God is a God who speaks and he still speaks.

He's spoken to us through the person of his Son. He's proved his love to us through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 59] He has shown how seriously he takes our sin and God has made a sacrifice for us which turns away his anger. Listen to the wonderful words which describe the power of God's word.

God revives the soul. It's trustworthy. Makes simple people wise. You don't have to be clever to be a Christian.

Gives joy to the heart. Light to the eyes. It endures forever. It's sure. It's righteous. It's precious. I think so many of the things that we hunger for in life can only come from God and from his word. Only come from God and his word. See, we seek satisfaction in relationships and we experience disappointment.

[20 : 01] Sometimes, I guess, you know, we look for a boyfriend or a girlfriend and we just think, oh, that'll make life so much better at the moment and maybe that's a nice thing and a good thing that God's given but it doesn't solve all our problems and meet all our emptiness.

And those of us who are married know that even the best marriages have their moments of biting disappointment. Or we look for joy in wealth and possessions and things and we find worry. And the more we have, the more effort it takes to look after it. I haven't got a pool and I can't afford one and I don't think the parish is about to put one down at Rain Street either.

Unless it's a Clark paddle pool or something like that. You should look at me and go, life's tough, eh? Not really.

But let me tell you, over on the northern beaches where my mum lives, she's got a, they've got family that lives next door and they have this wonderful pool. And they go away on holidays, they let me swim in it.

[21 : 20] And I can go over there and I can swim in it for Nick so I don't have to pay anything, I don't have to put the chemicals in, I don't have to clean it, I don't have to pay the loan at the bank, I can just go and swim in it. It's great fun.

I reckon if you own a pool, it must suck to have to look after it. And if you've got a pool and you let me swim in it, thank you. So Songwriter found, he found great joy and security of relationship in God's law.

In relationship with God. God has done something incredibly precious when he spoke to us in words.

He revealed what he's like and at the same time he overwhelms us with what we are not like. And that brings the response from the Songwriter which we read in the very last verses.

Verse 12, Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins.

[22 : 52] May they not rule over me. And then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

No. It's a great ending but I've got to tell you the first time I read it and many times I've read that and I really had no idea how to connect it to what has just gone before.

And I really read the psalm and I scratched my head. But it's a glory of God response. See, the writer encounters God in creation and in his word and he is just overwhelmed by his glory.

And it's like Isaiah, you know, encountering God flat on his face. Woe to me, I am ruined. I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the Lord, the King, the Lord of glory.

Or Peter, you know, throw out your net on the other side, lands enough fish to secure his life for quite a while and he just goes away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man.

[24 : 07] And it's the same here. The writer sees, reflects on God's glory in creation and God's glory in his words and he becomes very aware of how far short he comes.

He's reflected upon God's majesty in creation. He's thought hard about how he measures up against God's word and he's down on his knees praying for forgiveness and acceptance.

It's a very moving and a marvellous reaction to the Lord God. I think it does us well to think about who wrote this. King David. Man described as after God's own heart.

A man whose strengths and victories are on display in the scripture. A man whose tremendous failures in the flesh are also on display in the scripture.

But he did love the Lord and God continued to work with him. And he prays in verse 12, he says, forgive my hidden faults.

[25 : 16] And verse 13, keep me from willful sins. He knows he's not perfect, he's like us, he struggles with deliberate sin, he fights against it but it's still there and he's also wise enough to know that even if he's got his will in check there are plenty of areas of his life where he falls short even if he can't see it.

things like pride, you know, you struggle to be a humble man or woman and somebody says to you, boy you're a humble man or woman and then you say, I know.

Doesn't work, does it? We are sinful to the core and we need a saviour. I said to our 830 people this morning, I said both services really but one of the things I often don't do in a communion service with our older people and they'd really love me to do it is to read the Ten Commandments which are part of the service and a lot of old churches and this is one of them used to have a board out the front with the Ten Commandments out there in front of people all the time and they told me in the service this morning that it's in there maybe turn backwards no, it's not but I want to say it's

scripture the Ten Commandments are scripture and there is nothing wrong with God's word and Jesus said nothing to turn those commandments on their head or to revoke them so in terms of what they say they are God's truth and they are worth hearing I said to the church family this morning one of the reasons

I really don't like reading them regularly in the communion service is because thou shalt not commit adultery oh tick I haven't done that thou shalt not murder well certainly never done that thou shalt not steal oh no well back in second class I might have taken a friend's rubber no I haven't done anything much like that for a while and so what happens as we do that we look at God's word and we go tick tick tick and what we do is we glory in ourselves at that moment and it's almost like look at me look at how I measure up against God's law and we steal God's glory and I think it's why Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount turned some of these things on their head to help people to think about what really mattered and what they really mean so you guys say that you have never committed adultery said Jesus I want to say to you that if you've even looked at a woman lustfully you've committed adultery in your heart and to all of you you say you've never murdered if you have even hated another person in your heart then you've done even worse than murder men's breakfast yesterday morning was a really good time for a number of reasons and I went away there are a few things I was thinking about that I was reflecting on but I was very moved later in the day as I thought about what happened because the thing that moved me most is that Ian who's on the drums often he gave his testimony he gave a bit of a talk and he said how much he loves Vander a couple of times through the morning and I went away and thought wasn't that a wonderful thing to hear one brother in

[29 : 08] Christ saying how much he loved another brother in Christ Christ and I thought wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to be being repeated over and over and over again in our church family where we speak of one another as I really love you I really love that person in Christ I really love them for the way that they encourage me and know me and build me up and I took that a step further because I'm saying to you I need people that I can go to and say brother I'm struggling brother there's all this stuff that's going on in my life and I need to tell you about it because I need you to remind me from the scriptures one what I already know that if it's sin to be able to say look brother I know it's a sin but I want to remind you of the grace and mercy and kindness of

Christ in bringing forgiveness for that sin and I want to encourage you to cling to Christ and I will pray for you and I will ask you how you're going and what do we need for that to happen we need trusting relationships don't we we also need people who don't feel like they need to pretend where we're able to come and say I am broken and I need a saviour and yes I struggle here and I struggle here and where we don't jump on one another in guilt and judgement but where we work to build one another up in Christ even in the face of our sin I think it's true worship this is a wonderful passage what goes on here the whole creation that we live in declares the glory of God the glory of God has been revealed to us in his word and and lastly through his son the Lord Jesus Christ and it is true worship to acknowledge God for who he is but it also means knowing ourselves for who we are true worship is being brought face to face with God acknowledging our sinfulness delighting in his glory and rejoicing in the safety and the undeserved forgiveness that we find in Christ who can forgive even our hidden sin amen amen for our forms crochets to face with him Mic■em with