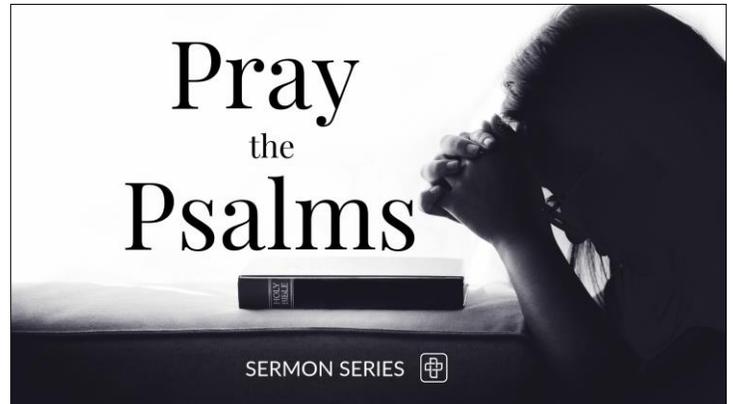


## Rejoicing in God's Revelation

### Psalm 19

Dan Leeper      June 2, 2019



A couple days ago I discovered that my iPhone was not indicating when I was receiving voice mails. A couple people said, "I left you a voice mail," and I said, "No, you didn't." They said, "Yes, I did." I started looking into this and one thing an article said to try was instead of just using the visual voice mail, where you can see all the messages and hit "play" on each one, to actually call in to the voice mail.

So I brought up the keypad and held down the number one and it called in. It said, "Please enter your password," so I had to try to remember my password. I put my password in and then it said, "You have 18 unheard messages." In that moment I felt a little sick. "Who's mad at me? Who's upset because I haven't been returning their calls."

As I was going through them, one of the messages said, "Hi Dan, this is David. Just wanted to know if you had a particular Psalm you wanted to preach on June 2?" David never confronted me about my lack of response, but at some point he did go ahead and suggest Psalm 19. So this is my public apology to you if you called me and I didn't return your call. Or if you know someone who's at home today, boycotting church, because they're upset with me, please pass along my apologies to them.

It's not pleasant. We've all experienced calling or texting or emailing someone with no response. Just silence. This is what is difficult sometimes about prayer. As we are in this series about praying the Psalms, sometimes it feels like it's a real one-sided conversation. "Father, it's me again. I don't know if You're getting these messages, but I'm pleading with you for an answer."

The Psalms deal with this. There are a few Psalms that even accuse God of being silent. Psalm 28:1 says, "*...if you be silent to me, I become like those who go down to the pit.*" Several years ago Andrew Peterson wrote a song called "The Silence of God" in which he says:

It's enough to drive a man crazy, it will break a man's faith  
It's enough to make him wonder if he's ever been sane  
When he's bleating for comfort from Thy staff and Thy rod  
And the heaven's only answer is the silence of God

I think what Andrew is writing about and what some of the psalmists are writing about is the angst we feel when there are particular requests, when we're longing for God to relieve us from trials or at least answer the question, "Why are You allowing me to go through this?" When God doesn't respond in the way we want or in the timing we want, it feels to us like silence.

What Psalm 19 does that is also helpful for us is show us how God speaks. We're not always going to have answers from God the way we want or in the time we want, but it is helpful for us to see from His Word how He reveals Himself, how He speaks to us. Let's turn now to Psalm 19. We'll see in this Psalm two key ways that God speaks and how He reveals Himself to us. God isn't silent. He has spoken to us. Let's hear His Word.

- <sup>1</sup> *The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.*
- <sup>3</sup> *There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Their measuring line 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,*
- <sup>5</sup> *which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them,  
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.*
- <sup>7</sup> *The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is sure,  
making wise the simple;*
- <sup>8</sup> *the precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;*
- <sup>9</sup> *the fear of the LORD is clean,  
enduring forever;  
the rules of the LORD are true,  
and righteous altogether.*

- <sup>10</sup> *More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Moreover, by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Who can discern his errors?  
Declare me innocent from hidden faults.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;  
let them not have dominion over me!  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

This Psalm divides into two key parts. In the first we see God's general revelation through the world, through nature, through what He has created. In the second part, David speaks of God's special revelation through His Word. Then the Psalm ends with David's response to this. Let's start with verse one.

### **General Revelation – God's World**

In these first few verses, we find language about communication: declare, proclaim, reveal, speech, words, voice. Each of these words describe communication being done through God's creation. We read about the heavens, day and night, the skies, the sun—all things God has made. You can imagine David, as he's writing this, just looking up at all God has made and realizing these things are just singing of a Creator. "God, as I look at everything You have made in Your world, it reveals how great You are."

This was written 3,000 years ago and David's understanding of the world was miniscule compared to what we know now. Scientists—whether they know God or not—have helped this Psalm be even more grand as we understand even more of what God has made. Think of the intricacy of molecules, atoms, protons and electrons. Think of theories about quarks and all these different things that make up the complexity God's design.

Or think of the vastness of the earth that David would not have known about. There's a whole world that exists in the oceans. In the last couple months our family has watched some episodes from two different series: Planet Earth II and Blue Planet II. If you are a Christian, you

can't watch these without worshiping God for the beauty and imagination that is on display, the creativity of our God in the vastness of this earth. And that's just earth.

David is also talking about the heavens, the skies. If you go somewhere where there are clear nights and you can see the stars, it's estimated that the human eye without a telescope can see a couple thousand stars at any given time looking up into space. So that was David's view of the stars. Now scientists estimate that there are 100 billion galaxies. Not stars, galaxies.

Think about that for a moment. Each of those galaxies might have billions of stars in them. There are approximately 7.7 billion people alive on earth today. If we want to solve the overpopulation of the earth, we could just spread out and each have 12-13 galaxies to ourselves if we just divided out the galaxies. It's mind blowing to think how big this universe is, which all points to an even bigger, greater, more powerful Creator of this universe.

This Psalm is one of the key Psalms that talks about general revelation, the way God has revealed Himself in the world through what He's made, and also special revelation, the way He has revealed Himself to us in His Word. So we need to ask how we as Christians should approach this when some of the data between the two means of revelation seem to conflict? When we see something in the world that seems to contradict something we see in God's Word how should we react?

For instance, look at Psalm 19:4 where it talks about the sun coming out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, like a strong man running his course with joy, and about its rising and its circuit. We know that some Christians in the past have looked at this passage and believed it's heresy to think that the earth revolves around the sun. But the more we study God's revelation in nature, there are examples like this where God's work in the world helps shape our interpretation of His Word. We can be tempted either to be shaken by this and abandon the faith, or to abandon science and think there must not be any compatibility between the two. It's helpful for us as Christians to not be shaken by these things, but to believe deeply in the truths of God's Word, the truths He's revealed through what He has made, and understand that we sometimes are fallible in the way we interpret these.

In David's descriptions in this Psalm, he was not intending to teach astronomy, but to view the world as he saw it, describing its beauty with poetic imagery in a way that pointed to the glory of a really big God. R.C. Sproul put it this way:

If a theory of natural science is in conflict with a theological theory, or even contradicts it, here's what I know for sure: somebody is wrong. So I don't leap to the conclusion that it has to be the scientist. It might be the theologian. Nor do I leap to the conclusion that it must be the

theologian; it can well be the scientist. That's because we have fallible human beings interpreting infallible natural revelation and we have fallible human beings interpreting infallible special revelation.

In other words, Scripture tells us that God has revealed Himself through the world He's made and through the Word He has given us. We can humbly say, "I know what He's revealed is true, but maybe my interpretation of it has been wrong." So Christians, let's pursue knowledge of God's creation. Let's pursue the sciences. Let's seek to understand what God has made and enjoy learning about it. The more we learn about this creation God has made, the more it reveals the Creator.

It's like when we love a song. We listen to it over and over again, thinking about how the songwriter crafted the words and the imagery and how it says things that resonate with us and how the music contributes to it. Or people will gather from all over the place to see a painting that someone painted years and years ago. They'll stand there for hours, appreciating that art. As we study and appreciate what God has made, it's a way we honor the Artist-Creator Who is behind it all.

How then do we think about the way to pray these things? A song I grew up singing in my church by John Keys says:

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the world Thy hands have made  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed  
Then sings my soul, my Savior, God, to Thee  
How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
And see the brook and feel the gentle breeze  
Then sings my soul, my Savior, God, to Thee  
How great Thou art!

I grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City, but my grandparents lived in rural Iowa. We loved to visit them, take sleeping bags, go up on their hill and sleep under the stars. We'd fall asleep trying to see how many shooting stars we could count. I would lay there and just respond to God in prayer. Being outside in God's world has always helped me in prayer and communication with Him. I'll go to LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve and just walk through the woods. Talking to God and

reflecting on what He has made helps in communication with Him. The world He has made speaks to us. It declares His glory and greatness.

When we're filled with anxiety and worry, how does nature help communicate to us? Well, Jesus said, "Look to the birds. Consider the lilies of the field. Through them, hear God say, 'I've got this. I've got you. You're mine.'" Watch a tree as it sways in a storm, pummeled by the winds and rain and hail, then hear God say to you, "My daughter, I know you feel beaten down by the wind and rain and hail and the storms in your life right now, but you will stand. Your roots are deep. You are like a tree planted by the rivers of water that will bring forth fruit" (Psalm 1).

God does this all through Scripture, pointing to what He has made to teach us things about Himself. When we get a view of God that seems small and our problems seem big, we need to just look at the stars and dream about how far away they are. Then we'll grow in our appreciation for God, being reassured, "You are big and easily in control."

### **Special Revelation – God's Word**

David goes on to say in verse seven, "*The law of the Lord is perfect.*" He transitions here to talk about God's special revelation in His Word. I think it's helpful to see that the first thing he says is that it's perfect, blameless and complete. It is more clear in explaining God to us than what we have in nature. The heavens declare His glory and there are things we can learn about Him there, but His Word, His law—specifically for David, the Torah of Yahweh—is perfect.

As you look through the next three verses, you're going to see some synonyms for God's law, then some descriptions of it, then what it accomplishes. Let's go through and look at the descriptions. "*The law of the Lord is perfect...the testimony of the Lord is sure...the precepts of the Lord are right...the commandment of the Lord is pure.*"

The next one seems to change a little bit. "The fear of the Lord" isn't elsewhere used in Scripture as a synonym for God's law, but more of our response to it. Perhaps David has in mind what it would be like to summarize the message of God's Word as being to fear God and worship Him. Or else he's just leading us to think about how to respond to God's Word. "*The fear of the Lord is clean...*" a word that refers to its purity, being free from idols and the worship of other gods. Then, "*The rules of the Lord are true...*" David is reveling in the surety, the beauty and the rightness of God's law.

Then he talks all the way through here about what God's Word does for us.

- It revives the soul, giving it life. Some translations imply a kind of conversion here, a giving of new life.

- It makes wise the simple. There are things we don't know. Sometimes this word refers to the lack of wisdom that youth have.
- It rejoices the heart. It does bring a joy of the Lord that's inexpressible.
- It enlightens the eyes. Some places in Scripture talk about the dimming of the eyes leading toward death or sickness, so this would imply a rejuvenating effect. But enlightening the eyes also means the Word enables us to see the right way to go.
- It also endures forever and is righteous altogether.

If you were to think about how to pray in response to this, how to pray through this Psalm, it might be worth asking God, "Am I approaching Your Word in ways that allow it to have these effects on me? Lord, I know Your laws are perfect. Lord, revive me. Allow Your Word to give life to my soul. Lord, give me wisdom where there are ways I don't understand, when I don't know what is right. Give me wisdom through Your Word. Help me treat Your precepts in such a way that demonstrates that I believe they are right. Give joy to my heart that's aching. Help me find my joy in Your Word—in You and how You've revealed Yourself, rather than in lesser things. Lord, Your commandments are pure and give me direction; help me, God, to seek direction from You, not just from my own wisdom or the wisdom of this world." In other words, as we pray through these descriptions of God's Word, we're asking Him to use it to actively be having these effects on our hearts.

Then in verse ten, David responds by thinking of the Word's value—the fact that God's Word should be and is desirable when we view it rightly. He says, "It's better than wealth. It's better than pleasure. Your Word, God, is to be desired more than gold, more than money, more than whatever that money can buy for me."

He says, "I long for it more than I would long for honey," which satisfies, energizes and gives that jolt of pleasure that sweet things can bring. We have sweeter things now than he had back then and that maybe are less good for us. But he's describing something that's sweet and good and enjoyable and says, "Your Word is better than that. Your law is better than that."

Then he transitions into a communication to God. In the beginning of this Psalm he's really talking about God and how He's revealed Himself through creation and the Word. Now as he's reflecting on that, he starts talking to God about it. This is a good way for us to read Scripture and then respond to God. In verse 11, David says, "*Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*" God, Your Word has this effect on me also; it warns me and promises that in following Your way, there is good reward.

But quickly David sees the sin in his own heart: *"Who can discern his errors?"* In other words, "God, as I meditate on Your law, the Torah, I start thinking about my failure to keep it." We see this progression from errors and faults and sins. Errors seem to be accidental ways that we mess up and are not even aware of as we're going through our day. We couldn't even tell we messed up in that way.

He goes on in verse 12, however, and says, *"Declare me innocent from hidden faults."* These are heart sins that are in us as well. Then there's a further step, *"Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins,"* or as the NIV puts it, "willful sins." There is a progression from the accidental ways we mess up, to the inner struggles we have, then even to the outward sins that we give in to—willfully and flagrantly violating God's laws.

*"Let them not have dominion over me!"* David is crying out to God, "Declare me innocent." *"Then I shall be blameless."* As David Sunday was preaching recently, he talked about the word "blameless." It's not sinless perfection but is a category of being forgiven and desiring to follow God. *"Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression."* David is not just trying to be forgiven of his sins; he also wants to live a life that is pleasing to God. So he says in verse 14, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."*

David is talking about God's law, the Torah, which are the Scriptures he would have had. Reading back into this now, we can apply this to God's entire Word. That's not too much of a stretch, because what he says about the law applies to our Scriptures as well. Even as we have more revealed to us from God, we can see things in his words that David would not have known. When he used the word "redeemer," that word in his day was a general word that meant a rescuer. But David had a longing for a Messiah to come Who could declare him innocent from his sins, which is how he could have viewed God's law as something sweet rather than simply crushing. He had an idea that there would be a way for him to be forgiven from his sins. But now we know even more fully what David was looking for. We can read in Hebrews 1:1-2 about the third way God speaks to us.

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

Hebrews goes on to show us how Jesus is the better sacrifice, the greater Priest, the greater Lamb, the greater everything that the Old Testament was pointing toward. When Jesus came, He

lived in our place what we could never live. We're confronted with God's laws, then like David, we say, "*Who can discern his errors?*" "God, I've got hidden faults and presumptuous sin. I need to be forgiven. I need to be declared righteous. I need Someone Who is completely blameless to take my place."

God has spoken that word through Jesus, Who came and lived perfectly in our place, then took that punishment we deserve. He bore the wrath of God on the cross, dying for our sins and then rising again, so that in Him we can receive what David was talking about regarding redemption and forgiveness.

As we pray this Psalm, we look at how God declares Himself through this world and respond by thanking and praising Him for what He has revealed. We also are able to dialog with Him by using His Word, which means our prayers are not just one-sided. These two things have been especially helpful to me as I pray: being outside in God's creation and sitting down with His Word.

As I go line by line through His Word, I look for promises to thank Him for and to claim. I look for sins that I need to ask Him to forgive. I look for character qualities that I know in myself I can't live out, so I ask Him to work these things in me. These are ways to respond to His words to us. The Word allows us to have communion with Him as He speaks to us and reminds us Who Jesus is and how He completely fulfills these laws in our place, giving us His life and His righteousness.

Hear this invitation to the Lord's Table from His Word. Church, the Lord has prepared this Table for all who love Him and trust in Him alone for their salvation. It is for all who are truly sorry for their sins, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus as their Savior and who desire to live in obedience to Him as their Lord. If this describes you, you are now invited to partake with gladness from the Table of the Lord.

On the night when Jesus was betrayed, He sat at supper with His disciples. While they were eating, He took a piece of bread, said a blessing, broke the bread and gave it to them with the words, "This is My body which is for you. Do this to remember Me." Later He took the cup, saying, "This cup is God's covenant, sealed with My blood. Drink from it, all of you, to remember Me." So now following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and this cup, the ordinary things of the world, which Christ will use for extraordinary purposes.

God meets us in the sacraments, communicating grace to us by means of water, bread and wine. In baptism, God reminds and assures us of our union with Christ in covenant love, the washing away of our sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, expecting our love and trust in return. In the Lord's Supper, Christ offers His crucified body and shed blood to His people, assuring them a

share in His death and resurrection. By the Holy Spirit He feeds us with His resurrection life and binds us to each other as we share one loaf and cup. We receive this food gladly, believing as we eat that Jesus is our life and food and drink, and that He will come again to call us to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Let's just pause and thank Jesus that He is our Redeemer. Maybe a specific sin has come to your mind that you need to confess, trusting again in Jesus as your Savior.

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