

“A Psalm for the Summer”

Introduction: Psalm 19 is a psalm of self-disclosure. It celebrates the fact that God has determined to make himself known to us, and that he does so both without words – through his creation, and also with words – through various forms of divine instruction. The wonderful reality for us is that we are loved by a God who has not remained silent, nor leave us guessing, about who he is and what he asks of us. It is a self-disclosure that becomes even clearer and more wonderful when we meet God in Jesus, the word made flesh. So, let’s begin by listening to how the psalmist describes it. [READ]

I. The Revelation of God’s Creation (vv. 1-6)

A. I’ve entitled this message a psalm for the summer because it begins with what most of us do in New England during the summer – we enjoy and celebrate the outdoors and the incredible beauty that surrounds us! The psalmist declares that beginning in the heavens, and radiating down to earth, the glory of God is being declared. And although it’s being declared in a wordless way, it is still being “poured forth,” the description of a gushing stream that never dries up. Why do the sun, moon, stars, mountains, valleys, and oceans move us so deeply? Why do we get up early to see the sun rise, a linger to watch it set? Why do we stand spellbound as we watch a butterfly, or stand in awe at the arrival of a thunderstorm? Because it’s all great art, the great artistry of the living God. God’s creation is like a painting, revealing something of the one who created it all.

B. In the opening chapter of his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul picks up this theme as he observes: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). Creation, in other words, carries with it a sense of transcendence, of something or someone far greater than us. It’s one of the many reasons we should seek to care well for all that God has made, being careful not to exploit what God has made in the pursuit of our own convenience or selfish purposes.

C. But if we’re not to exploit creation, neither are we to worship it. The psalmist makes this clear in the special shout out he gives to the sun. In poetic personification, the sun is described as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and like a champion, racing across the sky. This image likely comes out of the pagan myth of the sun-god who rests through the night in the arms of his beloved, the sea, and then at dawn emerges with renewed vigor. The psalmist’s point is that the sun, though worshipped by some, is merely a work of the creator God. Like all of nature, it is to point us to God, not serve as a god. Importantly, while nature points us to God, and may convince us that there is a god, it is only a part of the revelation of who God is. As the old hymn based on this psalm puts it in its opening verse:

The heavens declare Thy glory Lord, in every star Thy wisdom shines;  
But when our eyes behold Thy Word, we read Thy name in fairer lines.

And the second stanza makes it even clearer:

The rolling sun, the changing light, and nights and days Thy power confess;  
But the blest volume Thou hast writ, reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.

As Tim Keller writes in his little volume on the Psalms, *The Songs of Jesus*, “Nature tells us about God’s reality and power but not about his saving grace” (p. 33).

Illustration: It reminds me of an event in the business world, in which I used to work, affectionately called a “road show.” A road show took place when a company, typically one that is privately owned, sought to raise money for their operation, or for the launching of a new product, by selling shares to the public in what is called an Initial Public Offering (IPO). The company’s management team would go on the road, setting up a variety of meetings and gatherings at fancy restaurants or hotels, inviting potential investors and stock analysts to come and learn about all that the company was seeking to do. It usually began with a glitzy, multi-media presentation that would have pictures of things like the company’s new facilities, its bright looking work force, the new product line to be rolled out, and some pie charts of all the revenue they anticipated rolling in.

But a prudent investor would want to know more. They would want to “get behind the numbers,” as the saying goes, seeking to understand how these projections were going to be met, what would happen in an economic downturn, and how the company had performed in the past. Both stages of the presentation would be needed in order for an investor to get the whole picture.

## II. The Revelation of God’s Word (vv. 7-11)

A. We could say that Psalm 19 describes the two stages of God’s “public offering.” In the opening verses we get the multi-media blitz in which we see the beauty of his creation. It’s more of a general picture, and in fact, the generic word of God, “El,” is associated with these opening verses (v 1). Then, in the following verses, we are given what lies behind all that beauty. This picture has the personal name, “LORD,” associated with it (v. 7), as in this aspect of his revelation, God details the beautiful way we are to live within this beauty, and how he comes to our rescue when we don’t! This is God’s written or spoken revelation, the revelation with words which the psalmist calls God’s law, statutes, precepts, commands, and decrees.

B. We might be inclined to think of this divine instruction as kind of dry and dusty, or restrictive and harsh, but notice that it is celebrated instead as being perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, and firm, and bringing about refreshment, wisdom, joy, light, and great reward. I don’t know about you but I find that I want to pick up this word and find out what’s in it that brings such life to those who feed and nourish themselves on it. I also want to make sure I don’t miss how this word became flesh in the person of Jesus, the one the word points us to. As the opening verses of Hebrews put it:

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . . the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being. . . (He. 1:1-3).

Jesus is the most complete disclosure of who God is. Out of love for us, God chose to make himself known in an incredibly personal way.

C. So this summer I hope that you can take some time to pause, and in the quiet, enjoy a sunset, or watch a bee feed on flower, or walk through the woods or alongside the sea, allowing the beauty of God sink in. And then I hope you can come home and open up the beauty of God’s word, reading slowly through a gospel, perhaps, and feeding on the guidance and grace you find there.

As he ponders who God discloses himself to be, through the beauty of his creation and the wisdom of his word, the psalmist is led to ask who he is in relation to this God. It leads him to a time of confession, and a declaration of love for the LORD, the personal God who is his Rock and Redeemer (vv. 12-14):

But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD,  
my Rock and my Redeemer.

It is this Rock and Redeemer, this LORD who loves us so much that he sacrificed himself for us, who we meet in his word, and who we now meet as we come to his table...