

The Third Sunday in Lent, March 7, 2021 – Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in abundance from our almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In our responsive Psalm reading this morning we read selected verses of Psalm 19. You probably noticed that the structure of the Psalm was a little different than most of the other Psalms we use in the worship service. It had three sections of responsive verse rather than the usual two. This psalm has three very specific parts. Listen to the entire Psalm 19. I will point out the divisions as we come to them.

Psalm 19 -- The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. ³ They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. ⁴ Yet their voice^[a] goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. ⁵ It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. ⁶ It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. ¹⁰ They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹ By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹² But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. ¹³ Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. ¹⁴ May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

In the name of the suffering servant of God, Jesus our Savior, dear fellow believers!

When the Children of Israel were on their journey out of Egypt they experienced the terrifying position of being boxed in. The Red Sea was in front of them and the army of the Pharaoh was behind them. They could see the cloud of dust formed by the chariots and horsemen of the Pharaoh. God had been leading them with a pillar of cloud that turned into fire at night. But now as the army approached from the rear that pillar moved behind them to separate them from the army. It was light on the Israelites side but dark on the Egyptians side. After safely crossing the Red Sea and the destruction of the army God continued to show his presence through that pillar of cloud and fire. God showed his glory through that pillar which stayed with them for the entire 40 years that they spent in the wilderness. About 500 years later that glory of the Lord also appeared when Solomon dedicated the newly-built temple in Jerusalem.

In Psalm 19 King David writes about the glory of God. He invites us to

See the Glory of God . . .

- in his creation;
- in his Word; and
- displayed in our lives.

Listen again to verses one and two of Psalm 19: *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ² Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.* David invites us to peer out into the sky, both at night and in the daytime. As we do that David tells us that we can see God's glory. He's actually talk about all of God's creation, especially the

universe – the sun and moon, and the planets, our Milky Way galaxy and whatever might be beyond what has been discovered. David want us to see the glory of our God in the cycles of nature, in the beauty and majesty of mountains and prairies, and the blessings that come to the earth through the changing seasons. Though God’s creation cannot speak as we can, the message that creation presents is that we have a glorious, wise, caring, and powerful God. He made it all. He made it all for the good of the human race which is the crown of his creation.

The deception of Satan leads people to embrace the thought that this isn’t all the work of his hands; that perhaps God provided some spark for beginnings, but then over time this beautiful nature in which we live developed on its own. The devil wants us not see God’s power and wisdom as we observe nature. Don’t get trapped by his logical sounding deceptions. Beware of thinking that sounds good, but puts limits on God and his powerful creating work.

David encourages you this morning and every day to enjoy his creation. Spring is on its way! Yesterday as we drove into Milwaukee for a funeral, I could see some of the willow trees with significant spring color. When we got home we walked around our yard and could see daffodils and hyacinth poking up from the ground. Some even poking through snow! No matter what the season is, no matter what the weather is, observe and enjoy the habitat which God has given us. As the earth warms, the grass greens, the trees bud and the flowers bloom see the glory of God! His creation reveals his wisdom, his power, his goodness, etc. But not just in the spring time. His glory is revealed in all the seasons and cycles of nature.

As we come to the second set of verses of Psalm 19, David focuses our attention on God’s Word and invites us to see there God’s glory. In verses seven through nine he lists six titles for God’s Word with six attributes of his Word and six blessings which his Word delivers. We know that the two main teachings of his Word are the Law and the Gospel. While these six titles sound like references to the Law, we know that in the Old Testament especially the term law often refers to the entirety of God’s Word, both law and gospel.

Consider verse seven: *The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.* What a bold but comforting statement—God’s Word is perfect. It tells us everything that we absolutely need to know! It is perfect because through it we are convicted of our sin and shown our need for our Savior. It is perfect because throughout its pages that necessary Savior is proclaimed. It is perfect because it refreshes our souls with that sweet gospel message of forgiveness and restoration into God’s Family through Jesus. Christ. The glory of God shines through this perfect, refreshing law of the LORD.

Verse seven continues: *The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.* We found out by experience that there is much that is trustworthy. We have been told to “Follow the science.” But then the science changes. Sometimes it seems that finding something trustworthy is pretty illusive. But not so with God’s statutes. In fact the most vital of all wisdom is offered in the simplest of terms, so that anyone and everyone can possess the wisdom that is truly transformational—the wisdom that matters for eternity. You don’t need to have a PhD or be college professor. You don’t have to be a leader in business or industry or government. With the trustworthy wisdom of God’s statutes you are truly wise.

As we continue through Psalm 19 King David tells us: *The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.* God’s Word, his precepts and commands, are right and radiant. Their message fills us with the joy of salvation and guides us in daily, holy living. These verses remind me what David wrote in Psalm 119. There are 22 sections in that Psalm – one for each letter of the alphabet. Each of the eight verses in each of the 22 sections starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The entire of Psalm 119 speaks about the message and usefulness and blessing of God’s Word. I am guessing that many of you remember Psalm 119:105. *“Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.”* What a marvelous verse, especially as we think about what life was like in King David’s day. The use of electricity had not been figured out. Sidewalks were unknown and paved roads were uncommon. People didn’t venture out at night unless absolutely necessary. If they had to go out in the dark

of the night, they often tied little clay lanterns to their sandals, so that they could see where to step – over the tree root which was about to trip them; around the stone that was about to cause them to stub their toe; and over the animal droppings which would make their feet filthy. So God’s Word shows us precisely where to step in life—exactly how to live in thankfulness to God for his salvation.

So God’s Word reveals his glory as he speaks to our consciences and our hearts and our minds. But once more the devil is out there to confuse and mislead God’s people. He tries to supply all sorts of substitutes for the truth of God’s Word—all based on human thinking. But every thought that finds its truth anywhere but in His Word has no value. David says about God’s Word: it is *more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb*. All the gold in the world can’t buy Christ’s forgiveness and the hope of heaven. Your greatest wealth comes when you see God’s glory in his Word. Nothing can bring such sweetness to our souls as the assurance of eternal joys in the peace and rest of heaven.

With verse eleven King David transitions from his encouragement to see God’s glory in his Word to his recommendation to display God’s glory in our lives. *By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward*. With God’s word as our guide we can reflect his glory in our daily living as we move away from sinning and strive to serve him out of thankfulness for the forgiveness and salvation which is ours through our Savior Jesus Christ. David’s prayer and ours seeks God’s wisdom and strength so that we can avoid those sins which known only to him and me. Even David says our prayer is that we avoid those sins which don’t even seem to us to be sinful.

In his concluding prayer (*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*) David prays that he will be able to display the glory of God through the speech from his mouth and the thoughts in his mind. Then the glory of God revealed in his creation and in his Word will be displayed in our daily lives. Amen

Pastor Joel W. Jaeger