

## The Word and Witness of God

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This morning we are going to look at Psalm 19. This Psalm is all about communication. God's communication. His communication to humanity. Another way to put it, this Psalm is all about God revealing himself to us. But in order to reveal himself to humans, God had to condescend to us. That word, condescend, has more of a negative tone to it. Because when we hear it, we hear an insult. There is nothing worse than a condescending boss, right? Someone who talks down to you because they think lowly of you. Like you wouldn't be able to understand them unless they came down from their throne of superiority and spoke to you.

But when we apply that word to God's interaction with humanity, it's wholly appropriate. God is coming down from his place in eternity, from his existence as an infinite and perfect God, to communicate to fallen and finite creatures. For God to explain to us his own nature or our own nature would be impossible for us to understand if he tried to explain it to us at his own level.

Look at it this way. I have a daughter, she can't say very many consonants. She's got the vowels down, but consonants are hard, and she often skips them altogether. Water become wawa, waffle becomes wa-oh, and please become pees. She also communicates through a number of sign language signs. As we try and teach her words and sentences, we often find ourselves bringing our language down to communicate to her and help her learn. She doesn't understand us unless we talk slowly, use words she knows, and point to things.

God communicating to humanity, God reveals himself to us, is like an adult trying to teach a toddler language. The nature of God's character, his attributes, the work of God in what he's done, the desires and delights of God, all of it needs to be communicated to us in a way that we would understand. And because God is so merciful and kind, that is precisely what God did.

In Psalm 19 David reflects on how God has revealed himself to his people. Work of God through Creation, Word of God through Scripture, Witness of God through Jesus. My hope for

this message this morning, I hope that it is both instructive and produces wonder in your soul. Instructive that you and I might understand the mechanisms that God has chosen to reveal himself to us, that we might know him, and obey his commands and conform our lives to his creative purpose for us. And wonder, that he has come down from his seat in glory to show you what he is like. To give you specific wisdom on how to live life in a way that maximizes your joy and his glory. To seek a relationship with you personally. So that we might respond to God, as David does, longing to honor a God who is so full of wonder.

Psalm 19:1-6. Everyone on earth can point to nature and notice how phenomenal it is. It isn't normal, that this universe would just exist. Even if you aren't a Christian or subscribe to a creator, we can all agree that creation and nature are wholly unique and phenomenal. For the Christian, and for David, that uniqueness is expressed as God revealing himself. The very existence of all of this, shouts of God's glory.

Notice the specific words David uses to describe creation. All this poetic language to say that the existence of the skies, and the stars and the sun scream of God's power and creativity and majesty and bigness. The last word of verse 1 is handiwork. 1. The Work of God Through Creation. The first way David describes God's condescension, his revelation, is through the work of God in creating Glacier. In creating the Grand Canyon. In creating the vast depths of the ocean where we have yet to explore.

So God has come down, and in the very act of creation, he is revealing himself to us. All of what God does, reveals something about his nature and character. In creation we can see his power. We can see his creativity. We can see the utmost of beauty so we see his beauty. We see the ordering of day and night, the rotation of planets, the organization cells down to the smallest degree we see God's meticulous care and detail.

When's the last time you glanced over to the vastness of Lolo Peak, and the first thing you thought of was the power of God? What about looking at the trees, green leaves through the spring and summer, turned to yellow and brown during the fall, and now the naked beauty of much of the trees that dot the area. When's the last time the beauty of the changing colors of the seasons caused you to consider the creativity of a God that would put a color wheel in trees?

This planet is miraculous. If you've seen any of the recently popular environmental documentary series, One Strange Rock, Planet Earth, they artfully describe the complexity of our planet and the life that lives on it. These shows provoke awe, and an immense amount of it.

But there is a common thread to all of it. All of it screams the existence of God. "Here I am! Look at what I've done! See this and have confidence that I am here!" But even beyond the existence of God, it all "declares" and "proclaims" the existence of a beautiful God. A creative God. An ordered God. A God of details. A thoughtful God. A Powerful God. A vast and infinite God. We live in Missoula, a truly unique place. Beauty that many people only dream of living in. More than most we get the varied proclamations of God through creation.

And we get it, so that we might worship. We get all of it so that we might turn to the creator of it all, rather than merely cherishing what he's created. Romans 1:20-21. The first way God has revealed himself is through his work of creation. That we might see his divinity and his power and more than recognize the existence of something out there above it all. But in seeing the vast complexity and beauty of all of this, through an analytical mind or a creative one, there are two divergent responses. Either you see it and marvel and are compelled to consider a creator over it all. Or like these Romans, ignore that compulsion, and rest solely on creation itself, foregoing any implications it might have to the existence or glory of God.

Either you experience it and want to know God, or you experience it, and consider that enough to satisfy. The problem is, creation itself isn't enough to arrive at knowing God. These Romans thought so, and they chose to revel in the mere shadow of beauty and creativity, rather than knowing the one who cast the shadow. So when you look around you, what do you see? Are you compelled to know the God who with a word spoke it all into existence? Or are you satisfied with the experience itself? You have a life to get back to.

David sees creation, it shouts of God's glory. His power. His might. His beauty. But David knows that knowledge of God through creation alone is limited. Which is why David turns to another source of God's revelation and condescension. Psalm 19:7-11.

Look back at the song, look to the subject of what David is marveling at. All these words in the historical context of ancient Israel have different nuances to what they mean. Some mean covenant. Some mean specific instructions. Some refer to the promises God has made. Some refer to the character and action of God himself. But by putting all those words together in this poetic song, David is trying to accumulate the sum of what all those words refer to as one unified subject: the Scriptures.

Look again at verses 7-9, look at the adjectives he uses to describe the law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear and rules. Perfect. Sure. Right. Pure. Enduring Forever. If we do the same exercise we did earlier where we arrived at scripture, put all these words together and the best synthesis we could muster was 'fullness.' The scriptures are the fullest and most complete picture David had of who God is, what God is like, and what God intended for man. 2. The Word of God through Scripture

We know by looking around ourselves on a mountaintop, that there has to be something behind all this, some kind of meaning to it beyond what we ourselves would define, and David is poetically saying there is, and it's found in his word.

Romans 1 says we can clearly see power and divinity, beauty and order behind creation, but creation doesn't explicitly speak of God's justice. It doesn't speak of God's mercy and grace. Creation doesn't mandate a specific pattern of living that reflects what God desires for his people and his creation. Creation itself doesn't promise eternity or a saviour. But the Word of God does. And it does so perfectly.

God's Word is him coming down to us to speak to us. It's the best kind of condescension. That he would consider us worthy, that he would choose to lower himself to speak to us in our own languages. First to Moses, then to David and the Prophets. Then to the disciples and Paul. The Bible is God speaking to us that we might not merely know he is there as creation shouts, but that we might know what he is like, that we might know the purposes he designed us for, that we might know the satisfaction of worshiping him as Lord.

Creation isn't a substitute for scripture. Your life experiences aren't a substitute for scripture. An education at university isn't a substitute for scripture. A TED talk or self-help

seminar isn't a substitute for scripture. There are no substitutes for scripture, because it is in scripture that God is revealing himself to you and I.

How many of us have sought to know God apart from his word? How many of us have sought a relationship with the Lord Jesus apart from his promises? How many of us have focused on what God has done, and thought it sufficient to know and follow him, and ignored or forgotten the importance of what God has said in his word?

Look at how David values scripture, by contrasting the full completeness of God's Word, as of so much greater value than anything in creation. Psalm 19:10. Using creation as comparison, using the first half of his song as a comparison: David sings that the word of God is more valuable than one of the most valuable resources in creation, gold. A substance transcends markets and exchange rates, whose value is constant and assured. David also sings that the word of God is sweeter than honey. Sweeter than even the most decadent riches of food in creation.

Those of us that call ourselves Christians want so badly to know God. And yet we too often ignore one of the sweetest and most valuable gifts he's given us: his word. If you feel distant from him. If you feel stagnant. If you feel as if you aren't maturing like you expect or hoped. If you are reading books and listening to sermons and singing heartfully in worship, that you might hear and experience God, all the while neglecting your Bible, you are neglecting the most basic mode of communication between God and his people. There is no substitute for the specificity and comprehensiveness of God's revelation for you and I, than this sweet and beautiful book.

We are infants and children. We are incapable of understanding God apart from God revealing himself to us. Just like it is impossible for Harper to understand me, without bringing down my language to speak to her and communicate with her. But he has done that, he has condescended to us in our own languages, that we might know him. And not just that we might know the truth about God, but that we might experience the joy of living in that truth.

And there is joy to be sure! While the product of seeing God through his work in creation are the big truths, his power, his existence, his creativity, his glory; seeing God through his word is

a deeply personal experience. Psalm 19:7-9. There is such a depth of personal joy and soul reviving truth in this book, for those that see it and obey it, there is a well of satisfaction whose bottom cannot be reached.

The problem is, in our brokenness and weakness, we don't always see it, and we don't always obey it. David finishes this song by himself revealing the depths of his own brokenness. Where God revealed himself as beautiful David reveals himself and so deeply sinful that even he cannot mine the depths of his own brokenness. Psalm 19:12-14a.

David says there is so much wrong with me that I can't even see all of. There is sin in my soul that is hidden from me. There is evil in my heart that I presume to have a handle on, that I presume doesn't even exist. We are deeply fallen creatures. God's word exists that our souls might be revived and our hearts might rejoice, but often we don't see what God has revealed to us, because we are blinded by our own hidden faults and presumptuous sin as David describes.

There is almost certainly more to your sin, than even you can see or identify. This coming from David. A man who committed adultery with a woman, abused her, got her pregnant and tried to hide it by having her husband murdered. That guy, that was the sin he saw. Says there is deeper brokenness. There are desires lurking beneath the surface of our hearts that would surprise us, and they often supplant our desire to know God.

While God's word is perfect and pure and right and righteous altogether, we are not. We are incapable of meeting the fullness of obedience God has revealed to us. We are incapable to meet that fullness with our conscious selves, we are incapable in the deepest and most hidden parts of our hearts.

David felt this tension. A condescending God who for reasons beyond his understanding, would give to humanity his work and his word, only to find that his own heart was so broken that he could never be the man God was showing him he should be. That is why David cried out to God and asked him for help.

In other words, David couldn't do it. If we just consume only the revelation of God in his work of creation, we've already seen we will miss the specific of God revealing himself in his word. But even the two together, we are left frustrated. Because if all we had were instructions that we would inevitably fail to follow, we'd be left in the same place as those without the word in Romans 1: under judgement. Because no human being can fulfill the righteous requirements of God's Word.

David knew there was going to be more. Even greater revelation, even greater condescension. Psalm 19:14. Ultimately, what David was looking forward to was a redeemer. He knew that because God promised him, in the scriptures, that a redeemer would come, and that redeemer would keep the word fully where we could not.

You and I are privileged. We are privileged to live on this side of the cross of Jesus. Because that is the lense through which we get to read this Psalm and every other Psalm. David didn't have the specific clarity of the cross, but he knew that a Christ would come. The ultimate way God has revealed himself to us is through the witness of Jesus. 3. Witness of God through Jesus. In the ultimate act of condescension, Jesus made the descent from his throne, to enter this weak flesh, fulfill the word of God where we could not, and bear witness to the grace of God in the gospel.

John 5:37-40. These pharisees thought they could have life through the commands of God is they kept them well enough. If they were good enough and successful enough they could have what they needed. They didn't need a messiah and saviour because the Word was enough. The law and the word of God don't exist so that we might have confidence in ourselves. It exists that we might be convicted of sin and compelled to look toward Jesus. Because the word itself is looking toward Jesus.

I asked earlier if you were frustrated by your growth or maturity, if you felt stagnant. Sometimes that's because we don't cherish our Bible's like we ought to, and that's so true. But often that frustration persists when we eventually do dive into God's word, because we are focused like the pharisees on what we are capable of, rather seeing Jesus as the fulfilment of all. This whole book is about Jesus, not us.

More than a third point of revelation, Jesus is actually the fulfillment and endgame of everything God has said and done. The work and the word of the Father are unified in what they reveal, they both point to Jesus. Romans 8:22-24a. Creation itself look forward to a time where there is no dying. Where there are no consuming forest fires, earthquakes, flash floods and freezes, where there is no snow of any kind anywhere. The return of Jesus and the restoration of all things.

But even more than merely pointing to Jesus broadly that everyone might have this common experience, they both work together to reveal Jesus on a personal and relational level. 2 Corinthians 4:3-6. Everything God has done and said funnels to the special and unique revealing of Jesus to you and I specifically. Relationally. If you haven't seen this, right here might be God doing just that, helping you see it.

If you think that might be you, find an elder, find a pastor and ask for their help in discerning what it is you are experiencing. If you don't know who those people are, just ask the person who brought you or the person sitting next to you. If the greatest truth God was building to with the phenomena of creation and the cosmos was Jesus, then it would stand to reason that the fulfillment of your life's purpose would be Jesus as well.

Close out the Psalm with me, the last verse: Psalm 19:14. Most of the song consists of what the work of God declares about him, what the God himself declares through his word, and we've seen that both find ultimate meaning in Jesus. The is about what David declares. What kind of words and what kind of thought are produced by David.

The only way that to be acceptable in the sight of God is if he sees us through the blood of Jesus. Because as we've already seen, it's not enough to see that there is a God. It's not enough to try and fulfill his commands on our own, we can't. We need our rock and our redeemer. We need Jesus.

David's hope for his life, his outward and inward life, is that it would produce exactly what creation and scripture do: a bold declaration of the glory of God and redemption in His grace and mercy. What we want from our own lives, should be the same.

There are a lot of competing hopes though. Success in career and school. A stable and thriving marriage. Kids that honor us and speak well of us as parents. A house that shows we are put together, and responsible. For some of us, it isn't about what our lives say to our neighbors or friends or family, it's about what we ourselves get out of it. We want comfort. We want happiness. Security. Purpose and meaning.

All of our lives are saying something about who we are and what we believe. It really is just a matter of what is your life saying, what your life is revealing. If the light of the gospel in the glory of Jesus isn't at the very top of what your life is proclaiming both inwardly and outward, you are missing the purpose God himself has given to each of us.

So ask for help. Ask for help from your brothers and sisters to see what is hidden in your heart. That those presumptuous sins might not be what defines you, but that they too might become subject to the gospel of Jesus. And ask for help from God. To discern where you are weak. And to empower you to proclaim as the skies do the glory of God.