

January 24, 2015 - 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Psalm 19(NIV84)

Theme: Help me see your Glory . . .

- 1) *As I consider your creation, O God.*
- 2) *As I meditate on your Word, O LORD.*
- 3) *As I apply your Law and Gospel to my life.*

¹ *The heavens are telling how wonderful God is, and the sky announces what His hands have made.* ² *One day tells the next a lively story, and one night informs the next* ³ *without talking, without words, without a voice that can be heard.* ⁴ *Yet their sound goes out all over the earth, and what they say to the most distant parts of the world. He has set up a tent in the heavens for the sun,* ⁵ *and it comes like a bridegroom out of his chamber. Like a strong man it delights to run along its path,* ⁶ *starting from one end of the sky and moving around to the other. Nothing can hide from its glowing heat.* ⁷ *The LORD's word is perfect and gives new life. The LORD's truth can be trusted to make simple people wise.* ⁸ *The LORD's instructions are right, delighting the mind. The LORD's commandment is pure, a light for the eyes.* ⁹ *The LORD's command to fear Him is clean and forever the same. The LORD's decisions are true and altogether right.* ¹⁰ *We want them more than gold, more than plenty of fine gold. They're sweeter than honey, even when it flows from the honeycomb.* ¹¹ *Your servant gets light from them. If we keep them, we get a great reward.* ¹² *Who can know his unintentional errors? Cleanse me from hidden faults.* ¹³ *Above all keep Your servant from proud sins; don't let them get control over me. Then I'll be blameless and innocent of any great wrong.* ¹⁴ *May what I say please You and what I think be what You like, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

When the LORD commanded the Israelites to remember the Sabbath day, he wanted his people to do more than just refrain from work and go to a synagogue for worship. He wanted his people to spend an entire day meditating on who he is and their relationship with him.

Even though the outward specifics of the Sabbath command do not apply to New Testament Christians, God still wants us to set aside time to rest – meditating on him and his Word. Why? Because he knows how important such meditation is to our overall welfare – giving us courage to face the trials of life, warning us away from the sinful traps of the world, and offering us forgiveness and hope when we are overwhelmed with guilt.

Yes, in a world full of deadlines and stress, it is important for us to take frequent, meditative “Sabbath” breaks - reflecting on our God. With the 19th Psalm as our guide, let us do this, under the theme: **Help me see your Glory . . .** 1) *As I consider your creation, O God;* 2) *As I meditate on your Word, O LORD;* 3) *As I apply your Law and Gospel to my life.*

Part One: As I consider your creation, O God.

Our Psalm begins: *The heavens are telling how wonderful God is, and the sky announces what His hands have made.* ² *One day tells the next a lively story, and one night informs the next* ³ *without talking, without words, without a voice that can be heard.* ⁴ *Yet their sound goes out all over the earth, and what they say to the most distant parts of the world. He has set up a tent in the heavens for the sun,* ⁵ *and it comes like a bridegroom out of his chamber. Like a strong man it delights to run along its path,* ⁶ *starting from one end of the sky and moving around to the other. Nothing can hide from its glowing heat.*

The majesty of a sunrise and serenity of a sunset; the peace of a rainbow after a wicked thunderstorm and the grandeur of a clear, starry night – all these things (and many others like them) give me pause. I can't help but say a pray of thanksgiving when I experience them. Why? Because they all reveal to me the glory of our God – giving me insight as to who He is and proclaiming his wisdom, power, providence and love.

Now, someone might disagree, saying: “When I consider the vastness of the universe, I doubt how any god could have created it. It is so infinitely large that our small planet is not even equivalent to a speck of sand in the vast Sahara Desert. How could any “one” being create hundreds of billions of galaxies, each containing billions to trillions of stars – with just as many planets orbiting them? How can any being be mindful of all the thoughts of the billions of people on this earth, provide for the trillions of animals and insects and count the countless molecules and atoms that compose just our world – let alone the infinite universe? How is this possible?”

It's possible because of who God actually is. We call God “eternal, Almighty and all-knowing” but we rarely reflect on what these terms actually mean. All our thoughts of God and what He is capable of are tiny compared to the reality of his being. Modern astronomy has opened our minds to understand that when the Bible calls God almighty, it means that he is ALL mighty. Creation testifies to the limitless power and wisdom of our God.

Now I must admit that when I look at the starry, night sky – considering the vastness of this universe – I often feel all too small. What value can I have to God among the billions of people who live on this earth? How can I mean anything to him?

Then I remember the Scriptures which say: *What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?* ⁵ *You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.* (Psalm 8:4-5 NIV84)

This is the amazing thing about the LORD: even though the universe is so vast, proclaiming a greatness of God beyond imagination, yet this great and awesome God focuses his attention on you and me! This is both scary and wonderful beyond compare. It is scary because my conscience testifies that I have sinned against God and deserve his eternal wrath and punishment in hell. It is also wonderful because, as the Scriptures proclaim, our infinite God knows and loves us so much that he became like us in order to save us from our sins. This is something we cannot learn from creation but can only learn from his Word.

This is why King David - when speaking in this Psalm about how creation proclaims the glories of God - never uses the name "LORD" - reserving that special name of God's grace for when he speaks about the revelation God gives us of himself in the Bible.

Let us, therefore, meditate on how the Bible reveals God's glory.

Part Two: As I meditate on your Word, O LORD.

David writes: *The LORD's word is perfect* – that is, absolutely complete. Nothing is to be added to it or subtracted from it, nor should its meaning be changed in any way. Through it alone the LORD calls us to repentance and faith in Jesus – offering us new spiritual life. It refreshes, revives, and comforts weak and burdened consciences.

The LORD's Word is also described as *truth that can be trusted*. And why is that? Because, as the Scriptures say, *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?* (Number 23:19 NIV84).

Yes, we can believe everything God's Word says – even if it goes against all the wisdom of the scientists and philosophers of this age. They don't know what happened at creation – they were not there. But the LORD was. He is our all-knowing God, who grants divine wisdom to all who believe his words with a simple faith.

The LORD's instructions are right – they show us the correct path to take in life - always leading us to Jesus and his teaching about our salvation and the effect it has on our lives. Jesus' teachings *delight the mind*, that is to say, they gladden our hearts as we meditate on them.

The LORD's commandment is pure, a light for the eyes. And which commandment is that? The one Jesus spoke to his disciples on the night of his betrayal: *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (John 13:34 NIV84) How is this commandment a light for our eyes? Because it, first of all, points to how the LORD has saved us. Then it tells us how we can live as the people he declared us to be through faith in him – expressing the same love to others that he expressed to us.

⁹ *The LORD's command to fear Him is clean and forever the same* – that is to say that the Gospel causes one to fear God correctly: not in terror as his enemy, but in love and faith just like a little child respects the authority of his loving father.

The LORD's decisions are true and altogether right. His law exposes and condemns the evil lurking in the human heart. His Gospel tells us that we are forgiven because of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection on our behalf. All who repent and believe in Jesus are free from all sin. Eternal life is theirs.

When we meditate on the wonderful revelation the LORD gives us in His Word, how can our hearts not burn with love for him? He who created and sustains this infinitely vast and intricate

universe loved you and me so much that He took on human flesh and blood in order to save us. Yes, the revelation of these truths is to be desired *more than gold, more than plenty of fine gold. They're sweeter than honey, even when it flows from the honeycomb.*

Part Three: As I apply your Law and Gospel to my life.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: we must understand that the time we spend contemplating God's power demonstrated in creation and his mercy as revealed in Scripture will do us no good until we, with the Spirit's help, take one more step: apply these truths to ourselves. And this is exactly what David does in the last portion of our Psalm, when he writes:

¹¹ Your servant gets light from. If we keep them, we get a great reward.

Yes, there are great benefits in keeping the LORD's Law and Gospel. The Law is a light that shows us our sins and need for forgiveness. The Gospel is a light that shows us God's love and our salvation in Christ. When we believe, treasure, guard and obey both his Law and Gospel, the LORD showers us with many spiritual blessings – not because we have merited them; rather simply because He has set up his Word as the spigot through which he pours out his blessings upon us.

Applying these truths will lead us to repent of all sin. It will also lead us to ask the LORD to keep us from sinful rebellion, as David writes next: *¹² Who can know his unintentional errors? Cleanse me from hidden faults. ¹³ Above all keep Your servant from proud sins; don't let them get control over me. Then I'll be blameless and innocent of any great wrong.*

Yes, meditating on our relationship with God in Christ will have a profound impact on how we live our lives. It will move us to repent of and avoid sin, to live to God's glory, and to face every trial with courage and hope.

May these truths, then, ever lead us to take some time every day – to meditate on the glory of God proclaimed in creation and revealed in his Word – ever applying what we learned to our lives. Then we will be led to pray with King David:

¹⁴ May what I say please You and what I think be what You like, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.