

Called to Worship the Revealed God

Psalm 19:1-6 – page 456 in the pew Bibles

On April 12, 1961, aboard his Vostok 3KA-2 spacecraft, Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space and the first to orbit the Earth. It was reported that he said, after exiting the earth's orbit, "*I don't see any God up here.*" In all actuality, the saying may have been said by then Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, during a Communist Party meeting shortly after Gagarin returned to Earth. But two years after that, Russian cosmonaut Valery Bykovsky told newsmen in 1963 that no Soviet cosmonaut believed in God and none of them had seen anything to change their minds during their space flights.

However, this was in sharp contrast to their American astronaut counterparts who reflected, at least initially, something of a reverence for God and the Bible.

On December 24, 1968, Apollo 8 entered lunar orbit on the first manned mission to the Moon. Before retiring that evening, the astronauts did a live television broadcast to Earth, showing pictures of the Earth and Moon seen from their space capsule. As they concluded the broadcast, Lunar Module Pilot William Anders said, "For all the people on Earth the crew of Apollo 8 has a message for you." And each member of the team proceeded to read a portion from Genesis 1:1-10.

Seven months later, on July 20, 1969, with the largest worldwide television audience in history watching, Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong became the first two humans to visit another world when they stepped onto the Moon from their Apollo 11 Lunar Module *Eagle*. During a television broadcast by the astronauts the evening before splashdown, Aldrin quoted Psalm 8:3-4 – "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

Why is it that Yuri Gagarin and the American astronauts had such opposing perspectives? I mean, obviously the Americans didn't see anything that Gagarin didn't see out there in space. They certainly didn't see God Himself, for the Bible tells us that no one has seen God at any time. And yet the American astronauts saw *something* that pointed their minds and souls Godward.

This morning, I'd like to consider today's passage in Psalm 19 and discover just what it was that those astronauts saw, and what it means for us as well. What I believe we will find is that God has created the universe in such a way as to leave men without a doubt concerning His existence and His power. And what that means to us as humans is that we are all called to bow our knee in reverence and submission to the Creator of all these things.

As we look at Psalm 19 this morning, the first point I want to bring to your attention comes to us in verse 1 and that is...

1. God reveals His glory in the heavens so that people will worship. (v. 1)

This Psalm is concerned with how God reveals Himself to man and then our response to His revelation of Himself. It's concerned with God revealing Himself, or making Himself known, to the world, and what should be the response of His creatures, namely, worship.

Worship is our response to God's self-revelation. And the worship to which God calls all people transcends just what we do each Sunday as we gather together in church. Worship is a life response. When we see even a little bit of the majesty and glory of who He is, and when we see ourselves in respect to His greatness and majesty, and realize that we are but dust, we are His creatures and He is our Creator, the only thing that makes sense is to respond in humble submission and obedience to His Lordship through all of our lives, THAT is worship! And that is what all men are called to.

In Psalm 8, David gives us a beautiful illustration of what we're talking about. He begins with an overflowing burst of praise and worship to the majesty of God:

*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens!
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established your strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.*

Why this overflowing burst of praise? What caused David to sing out in worship and adoration as he did? We see in the next few verses:

*When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man
that you care for him?*

The passage today says, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." That word "handiwork"...don't we see that illustrated so well when David says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers..."

David uses poetic terminology called anthropomorphism...a really big word that basically means using human characteristics to describe God or God's work so that we can more easily comprehend something about God. God is spirit and He doesn't have fingers like humans, but the use of this poetic language conveys something that we understand. Just like we can look at a beautiful sculpture or a painting by an artist and see the work of their fingers and hands, so we see the heavens and see the handiwork of God and we know that He created these things.

And even from our vantage point on earth, on a particularly clear night, even with the unaided eye, one can see the immensity of the heavens! But when we look further with the help of telescopes, we see even greater majesty. I want to share some facts with you.

- The International Space Station orbits the Earth approximately 200 miles above the surface of the Earth. That's really not very far up there in comparison to other things.
- Astronauts took 3 days to reach the moon traveling at the speed of a bullet, about 240,000 miles from Earth on average. This is the farthest that humans have ever traveled into space.
- The Earth's distance from the sun is 400x greater at an average distance of 93 million miles away.
- And Neptune orbits the sun 30x farther away than that.
- The next nearest star system is Alpha Centauri...between our sun and Alpha Centauri you can fit 4,278 of our solar systems.
- Sirius, the brightest star in our night sky is relatively close, a mere 50 trillion miles away.
- The star Pollux, part of the constellation Gemini, is nearly 10x larger than the sun in diameter, and Arcturus is even larger.
- The center star of Orion's belt is Alnilam, a blue supergiant, is 25 suns in diameter, and is 1,000 light years away.
- Betelgeuse is a red supergiant, roughly 600 times the diameter of the sun, and over 400 light years away or 2400 trillion miles. And that's by far not even the largest star.
- Our galaxy, the Milky Way, expands 80,000 light years across and contains more than 100 billion stars.
- And our galaxy is merely one of billions of galaxies in the known universe.
- The Virgo Cluster is a massive grouping of over 2,000 galaxies. 15 million light years from Earth (give or take a light year or two). From the Virgo Cluster, our galaxy the Milky Way, would appear as a grain of sand lost in a vast ocean of galaxies.

In comparison to all this, the Earth is less than a mere speck in the vastness of the universe. And yet it is here that the Creator, the Word of God, became flesh and dwelt among us, and died on a cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

Indeed, "What is man, that you are mindful of him?"

God created all of this, the Bible says, to declare His glory. That all people would worship. Such revelation has been made unmistakable. And that's what we see in the next section of this passage.

2. The call to worship God goes out to all people. (vv. 2-4b)

Starting in verse 2:

*Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.*

³*There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.*

⁴*Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.*

Notice in verse 2, the heavens, day after day, are said to be *pouring out speech*, and night after night they *reveal knowledge*. David employs personification to make the statement that through the wonders of the cosmos, something definite is being stated. It's as if the heavens are speaking, and it says they are revealing knowledge. This suggests that this proclamation in the sky communicates to us, not just an awareness of God's existence, but also, some degree of knowledge about Him as our Creator.

I want to address exactly what knowledge is being revealed in the heavens in a minute, but right here I need to stop and clarify what is NOT being said. Someone may be tempted to see this passage and draw a link to using a horoscope or some kind of astrology. It needs to be clear that this passage is NOT talking about any such thing. In fact, God forbids this kind of divination.

- Astrology is expressly forbidden in Scripture in Deuteronomy 18:10-14.
- God forbade the children of Israel to worship or serve the "host of heaven" in Deuteronomy 4:19.
- In Isaiah 47:13-14, God chastises Babylon for seeking wisdom from the heavens and not from God.

So what knowledge is being revealed in the heavens, then?

The Apostle Paul addresses this very subject in Romans chapter 1 verses 19-20:

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

In theology, we call this general revelation because it reveals something general about who God is. What does it reveal?

- First we see that it reveals that God *can* be known. In other words, this is something everyone is able to see and comprehend.
- Second, we see that it is something everyone *should* be able to see and comprehend because God has shown it to them. God isn't hiding. There is enough revelation of God for all people without exception to know He exists and know something about Him.
- Thirdly, Paul says that God has revealed to all people His eternal power and divine nature in the things that have been made, which includes the heavens, which we are looking at today. In other words, we can know some definite things about God by what we observe in creation. For instance, it says "his eternal power." What is generally called "the cosmological argument" says that we know that everything we see must have had a definite beginning, and therefore, by necessity, must have had the start of their existence by something that was eternal. So then when we look at the universe, we can understand the eternity of God. God is eternal – the Uncreated One – without beginning and without end. As the song says from the musical "The Sound of Music," "Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could." But not only is He eternal and uncreated, but He is all-powerful, since He is the One who Created all these things. This also attests to His "divine nature" which is obviously different from what we know human nature to be. This reveals His "otherness" or holiness. And this reveals His glory to all.

- And lastly, Paul then says that such a revelation is sufficient enough to leave all people without excuse. This is seen also in our passage today in Psalm 19, verses 3 and 4.

³ *There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.*

⁴ *Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.*

That which the heavens are declaring, every bit of it, is able to be heard. In other words, they declare God's glory loud and clear! Not only that, but no one is missed! Not one single person. It says that this declaration goes out through all the earth, even to the end of the world, which means that its coverage is exhaustive. No matter if you live in the United States and are well-educated, or if you are a native in the jungles of South America, the heavens communicate the knowledge of God to all people everywhere.

Now as we will see next week, there is a huge difference between general revelation and what's called special revelation which is God revealing Himself in His Son and in His Word. General revelation, that which we are talking about today, is far, far inferior to the Word of God in terms of the amount of information it reveals about God and His nature, His will, and His works. Nevertheless, it is vital that we see that nature reveals enough information about God as to render all men without excuse. No one will ever stand before Him at the judgment and be able to say, I never knew You existed.

But David gets even more specific. If he focuses mainly on the nighttime sky in Psalm 8, talking about the moon and stars, in Psalm 19 he draws our attention specifically to the sun and God's sovereign Lordship over it. And since this revelation is designed to lead us to worship, we need to understand something very important about what this revelation tells us, which brings us to our third point this morning:

3. We must recognize God's Lordship over all things. (vv. 4c-6)

Paul told us that in His creation, God has revealed His eternal power and divine nature. Quite simply that means that God is Lord over all that He has created. Which stands to reason. If you create something, then you have the right to make the rules for how that something should exist.

David brings our attention specifically to the sun starting at the end of verse 4,

In them he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵ *which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.*

⁶ *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.*

Again, David uses poetic language to describe the sun's daily cycle. He says it comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber. In the context of the time, when someone was getting married,

a bridegroom's friends would go to the bridegroom's house when the wedding was ready and bring him out and accompany him to the wedding, and he would come out to the wedding arrayed in splendor and with great pomp.

It just so happens that tomorrow we will be experiencing great pomp that some get to experience only once in a lifetime. It'll be the first total solar eclipse in 38 years. Parts of 14 American states will experience late evening-like conditions for a couple of minutes, but all states will be able to see much of it, while the moon passes completely in front of the sun, creating what promises to be a truly spectacular event that loudly declares the glory of God.

Likewise, David describes the sun as coming out day after day like a bridegroom, as it were, parading across the sky in all its splendor. And thus we see that the it serves as a reminder to us of how even the sun declares the glory of its Creator.

We used to live in Arizona for three years. I wasn't real fond of Arizona, too hot and brown for my liking, but one of the things I did love about Arizona was the sunsets. As the sun was setting and it was filtered through the Arizona dust, the sunsets would be absolutely brilliant! Bright oranges, and reds, vibrant yellows and purples...all streaked across the sky and coming together to form a masterpiece! And every time I would stand and gaze at such brilliance, I would be in complete awe of what an awesome God we have!

But we shouldn't miss the importance of this focus on the sun in this part of the passage. If there is one thing people throughout the ages have known, it is that they need the sun to survive. The sun is necessary for warmth, for growing plants for food, and as we have come to see, it is in the perfect distance from earth.

I was with the youth at summer camp a few weeks ago, and on the last night they had a bonfire. Well, to say it was a bonfire is a bit of an understatement. The thing was huge! They had a guy out there with a fire hose, watering all around the fire, ready to douse it at any time if it ever seemed to be getting out of control. It reminded me that fire, while definitely used to serve man and to be a help in cooking, keeping warm when it's cold, and other things, if it gets out of control, it can destroy.

So it is with the sun. If Earth was any closer or any farther away, we would either burn up or freeze to death. But one thing is certain...we have no control over that. The fact that the sun is where it is and that it does what it does, speaks of the wisdom and power of God. It declares, not its OWN glory, but the glory of the One who created it and set it in its place and sustains it!

Genesis 1 tells us that the sun was given to us for "signs and seasons, and for days and years," and it became the natural source that God fixed in the heavens to bring "light upon the earth."

Ancient cultures, and even some today, worship the sun because of its centrality in life and because people depend on the sun for crops and other life necessities. And David knew all this. He knew how important the sun was to people and their attitudes toward it. And more importantly, God, who inspired David to write this, knew it as well. And I think that is why he singles it out here in the last part of verse 4 through verse 6. Because he wants to show that God

is Lord even over the sun. This is the point! The heavens are declaring that God is Lord over them and all creation!

In Acts 17, Paul was standing before the Areopagus, and he noticed that they had an altar built with an inscription on it, "To the unknown god." Paul began to describe the God of Creation and he said to them in verses 24 and 25, "*The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*"

Don't miss that.

God is the God who gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. This God, the God that created all things, the God that created the sun and the stars and the atmosphere that we live in, this God gives you the very life and breath you breathe every single moment of every single day. Later in Acts 17 it says that "in Him we live and move and have our being." This is the God that, as it says in Colossians chapter 1, verse 17 says that "in him all things hold together." And in Hebrews 1 verse 3 it says of Christ, that "he upholds the universe by the word of his power."

This God, the God who, as it says in Psalm 147:4-5, "He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. ⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure."

This God, whom Job 9:6-8 describes as the One "who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; ⁷ who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; ⁸ who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea;"

This God, of whom Isaiah says, "has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span"

This God, the God that created such a vast universe as to make our Milky Way galaxy seem like but a speck, this God took on human flesh and became a man on this tiny, seemingly insignificant smaller speck we call Earth, and as Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, "being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Every knee will bow. We are called to worship, to bow our knee before the majesty and glory of the One whose glory even the heavens declare.

As we come to a close this morning, let this be a reminder to us all, when we see the vast heavens with all their wonders, and when we see the brilliance of a sunset, that this God is the Uncreated One who created them all *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, and who is Lord over them all, and it is to Him and Him alone that we bow our knee, for He is worthy of all our worship.

We're going to sing one last song this morning, and I want to challenge you to pay special attention to the words as you sing, and let them lead you to a sense of wonder and awe of the God of all creation. The God before whom we lay down our lives. The God who is peerless in His majesty and splendor, and worthy to be lifted high.

But I also want to invite anyone who has never given their life to Jesus Christ this morning, who has never received God's gift of salvation, to consider this God to whom you owe your life. Not only does He lovingly sustain you and give you your very breath moment by moment, but He sent His only Son to earth for you, who died on a cross to save you from your sins which separate us from God, and to prove that He is who He says He is and to give us new life, Jesus rose from the dead three days later. He commands all of us to repent, to turn from our life of rebellion, and believe in Him, and trust in His finished work for you. The Bible says, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."