

# 11/19/23 - Psalm 19 - "More Precious Than Gold" (SOS Pulpit Fill)

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're reading from Psalm 19 today. To the Choir Master, a Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

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. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

[ 1 : 06 ] The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them is your servant warned. In keeping them there is great reward. Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.

Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Well, good morning again, everyone. I'm preaching again this week. As you know, Brent is sick.

[ 2 : 10 ] And so I guess he didn't take my advice last week about 1 Timothy 5.23. Didn't take any wine for his frequent ailments.

But now, in all seriousness, I don't think that works for viruses. But it is a blessing to be preaching again. And because of the short notice, we're going to take a break from our 1 Timothy series and going to be looking at, as Kimberly read, Psalm 19 today.

And so I really like this psalm. And when I'm given the choice to pick what to preach, Psalm 19 is a hard one to pass up.

So I want to look at it today. And I think there's a lot to it. It's a lot of verses, 14 verses. But I want to break it up.

I think it breaks naturally into three pieces. The first part being about God revealed in the heavens. The second part being about the law of the Lord.

[ 3 : 17 ] And the third part being a prayer for forgiveness. And so before we jump into it, I want to begin by thinking about what it means to know God.

What it means to know God. And so I think in my experience with evangelism, with apologetics, that a lot of people believe in God.

But less believe God. And I think there's a difference when we take the preposition out there. But far fewer truly know God.

And I think David was a man who knew God, who believed God, and who believed in God. And so we'll see that as we move through these verses today.

But first I want to remind you of God's commandments. I'm not going to list all ten, just the first two. The first, as decreed in Exodus 20, says, I am the Lord your God.

[ 4 : 28 ] You shall have no other gods beside me. And the second commandment, I'm paraphrasing here, here, God says, you shall not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above, earth beneath, the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. And so when God reveals himself in Scripture, he reveals himself as a jealous God.

He is the one true God, the only God who is worthy of worship. In fact, he is the only true God. But I think his commandments not only reveal truth about him, they reveal truth about the human heart, that we frequently fail these commandments, we frequently do worship other gods.

We create gods in our own image, in the image of the human heart, in the image of the created things. And this is true in every religion throughout the world.

Humans have a fault in creating for themselves gods who reflect their own understanding, their own heart, their own desires.

[ 5 : 56 ] And they create these gods that bend to their own will. They create these gods that bend to the cares of the world, the desires of the flesh, and the pride of life.

And mostly they create these gods because these gods can be appeased through something we have to offer. They can be appeased through perhaps good works, through sacrifice, or through our possessions.

But as we see it, it's not enough to believe in God. James warns that even the demons believe in God. Certainly it's not enough to believe in him.

It's not enough to believe in some abstract version of God. Instead, we must believe God himself. We must believe who he is.

We must believe that his words are true. And we must believe that his promises are sure. And so we know, those who know God, that it is by faith in his existence and faith in his promises that righteousness, that salvation is found.

[ 7 : 12 ] God, this belief or this faith is a complete and utter trust, a total dependence on God to accomplish something that by ourselves is impossible.

And so this is my brief definition of what it means to believe God, what it means to know God. Not an imaginary God that responds to our desires, not an imaginary God that rewards what we have to offer, but a real and living God that calls out to the truly hopeless with a promise that's received only by faith.

Hebrews 11 says in verse 6, without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

We find throughout Scripture that belief in God is not a static event that takes place in the life of a Christian. It is a dynamic pursuit of knowing God that continues as we grow to know God more perfectly, to trust his promises more surely, to obey his instructions more righteously, and to see him more purely.

And so God has revealed himself to all through his word. If we desire to know God, we must know his word.

[ 8 : 46 ] Through his word, we must know his son. And so I think, in his own way, from his vantage point a thousand years before Christ came, David helps us to see God, to know God in his word.

But before we explore Psalm 19, before we explore David's words, let's take a minute to pray for God's guidance as we impart into his word.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. Lord, we thank you for the truth that is to be found in it. Lord, we pray that you will help us to break down any idols that we have created in our hearts in place of you.

That through your word we may have a more perfect and steadfast knowledge of who you are, of what you've done. That we may come to desire you more than gold, and find your word sweeter than honey.

I pray this in your holy name. Amen. My first section, I want to look at verses 1 through 6. I've titled this section The Glory of God in Nature and then realized about five minutes before I came up here that I should have titled it Knowing God in Nature, but you can append it in your notes if you want to.

[ 10 : 24 ] But I want to look at these first six verses and see how David came to know God through nature. He begins by talking about the sky above, by talking about the heavens and how they declare the glory of God.

All of creation, in fact, declares the glory of God, God. But it is seen most clearly in the heavens. The heavens radiate the glory of God for all to see.

Moreover, the cycle of the sun and the moon, the continuous cycle of day and night, they declare the unfailing faithfulness of God.

God. And so David says that there's no language, right? He says, day to day pours out speech, night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard. In a sense, he's saying that there's no place, there's no language where the declaration of God's glory is not heard, heard through the universal language of his glory, of his beauty revealed in his creation.

[ 11 : 44 ] Most glorious among the heavenly bodies is the sun itself, which is a daily reminder of God's faithfulness rising each morning without fail for some 6,000 years.

And it will continue to do so until he tells it to stop. We find in Ephesians, rather in Hebrews, chapter 1, that God upholds the heavens by the power of his word.

It is he who keeps the sun, the moon, and the stars in their cycle. David compares the sun to a bridegroom leaving his chamber, excited, embracing the day as if the beginning of life itself.

And then he compares the sun to a runner, speaks more personally to me there, compares him to a runner who, like a strong man, runs its course with joy, right?

Like that invincible feeling of the second wind when you feel like you can run forever, unimpeded by pain or distraction. the sun runs its course with joy.

[ 12 : 58 ] The sun rises early in the morning from the east and it sets late in the evening to the west and there's no place in creation that is hidden from its heat and therefore all are able to marvel at the glory of God.

John Piper, when talking about this in his podcast a few months ago now, he marveled at the fact that the sun doesn't just set in the morning or rather rise in the morning and set at night but in fact it is always rising and always setting somewhere in the creation and therefore at every moment God is creating a unique sunrise and sunset that uniquely show his manifold varied infinite beauty and goodness for all to see.

David said in Psalm 50 verse 1 from the rising of the sun to its setting out of Zion the perfection of beauty God shines forth and so David he found in nature he found in the sun and the stars the sky above the glory of God revealed in his creation.

I think for us today from our perspective we're able to see even more of God's glory revealed in his creation. From the subatomic world of particle physics to the emergent properties of molecules of DNA of proteins that form the building blocks of life itself and even into the stars the furthest galaxies we can see with the most powerful telescope.

Those who study math we know there is an infinity of infinities that we will never fully understand or marvel to be found in God's creation.

[ 15 : 07 ] And so our understanding of God of who he is and how he loves is to be informed by the goodness that is revealed in creation. His creative power and his divine nature they extend in beauty that we are to grow to appreciate throughout our lives in many ways.

But there's also a limit to what we can know about God through nature. and there is a great danger for those who try to define God using nature alone.

I believe Paul's theology in Romans 1 aligns well with what David had to say in Psalm 19. Paul warned in Romans 1 that the ungodly and the unrighteous they suppress the truth that God has made known that God has made plain since the foundation of the world because through God's eternal power and his divine nature he has made it obvious that he exists and so no one is with excuse but the ungodly are futile in their thinking they exchange the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal man of birds of animals of creeping things just as the commandments warn right we worship the creature in place of the creator this remains true even today among the agnostics and the atheist who through science and an endless pursuit of understanding creation they have further suppressed the truth they've more fervently worshipped the creation in place of the creator rather than creation bringing us to a knowledge that the creator exists they have been deceived I believe when arguing with an atheist or an agnostic regardless of how adamantly they tell you that they do not believe in God Paul's words teach us David's words teach us that they're lying everyone through the same intuition that a child has when marveling at an insect or when staring up at the stars knows that God exists and by some great force of the will they may for a time suppress this truth but all know it to be true but God doesn't leave us in darkness trying to search his creation to

find him instead of his natural revelation alone he gives us special revelation the specific revelation of scripture as declared through his word and that is where David's attention turns next as we look at psalm 19 verses 7 through 11 in point 2 which I'm going to revise as knowing God in scripture as we move into verses 7 through 11 David he gives us six aspects six qualities of God's word through six different names and then he gives us four realities that are true for those who know and love God's word and so I'll list them here the first the law of the Lord is perfect found in verse seven we see that God's law is perfect in every part but it is also perfect in the whole God's word has grown through redemptive history what David knew of it was only perhaps five books maybe more of the oral tradition but we know much more of it but it remains true that his law is perfect it is holy it is righteous and it is good as Paul says in Romans seven moreover number two the testimony of the

[ 19 : 37 ] Lord is sure his promises are firm and they are unshakable he made a covenant and offered himself and swore upon his own holiness as David said in Psalm 89 35 the Lord has sworn upon his own holiness we see this as well in Genesis 15 when God established his covenant with Abram he divided the sacrifices and then God himself passed through the divided carcasses offering himself solely in the covenant in a sense saying that if I fail to uphold my word my promise my covenant then I will be rent in two I will cease to be God that is the certainty with which we have in the testimony of the Lord third the precepts of the

Lord are right verse eight his precepts are upright and they are morally perfect there is no injustice to be found no unrighteousness in the precepts of the Lord number four the second half of verse eight the commandment of the Lord is pure his commandment is free from any contamination like silver that's been refined seven times until the last drop of imperfection and dross is removed God's word his commandment is pure moreover he keeps his word unstained as he promises in psalm 12 verses six through seven so to the ones who claim that his word has been corrupted or it has been altered no God alone maintains the purity of his word fifth the fear of the Lord is clean verse nine the fear of the Lord is acceptable to God such fear has an enduring purity meaning it is ceremonially clean before God we studied a few weeks ago in psalm 86 I guess a few months ago now that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom the knowledge of his covenant begins with the fear of the Lord and sixth in the second half of verse nine we see that the rules of the Lord are true the rules of the Lord they provide objective moral truth the decalogue or the ten commandments are the only objectively true moral standard the standard of God himself and by which all are measured as we see in Romans 7 7 but these six truths while incredible they also have four effects that change the person who knows them and so going back to verse 7 we see that the law the law of the

Lord it revives the soul the soul of man is unrighteous without understanding and does not seek God Psalm 53 and Psalm 14 say that is quoted by Paul without special revelation man will not indeed man cannot seek after God it is only through the word of the Lord that the soul of man revives as was the case for Timothy in 2 Timothy 3 16 it is because faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of God the second truth we see is that the testimony of the Lord makes wise the simple the unfolding of God's word coming to understand and to know his word gives light and it imparts wisdom to the simple as we see in

Psalm 119 verse 130 it makes wise for salvation through faith as Paul said to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 3 15 the third truth the precepts of the Lord rejoice the heart the word of the Lord not only renews and transforms the mind but it brings joy to the heart of man we know that in the presence of the Lord there is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more as David says in Psalm 16 11 such joy is made possible because the holiness of God because of the perfection by which he keeps and displays his precepts and fourth the commandment of the Lord it enlightens the eyes the commandment of the Lord opens our eyes to know the ways of the Lord which are the path of life before before before knowing the

[ 25 : 01 ] Lord our eyes were drawn to the desires of the flesh the cares of the world the pride of life but through the word of God our eyes are enlightened to desire the things of God more than anything else as we see in 1 John 2 16 David found that as he grew to know the Lord as revealed through the word of the Lord his soul his mind his heart and his desires were reshaped to treasure the Lord above all else and so he says in verse not the wrong page verse 10 that the word of the Lord is more to be desired than gold than an abundance of gold or treasure moreover his words are sweeter than honey or the drippings of the honeycomb he found that the Lord alone satisfies the

desires of his soul but then he said as we move into verse 11 by the word of the

Lord his servant is warned in keeping these there is great reward there is reward to be found in the words of the Lord I think first a warning in seeking to know God through his word there is a limit to what we can know about God by searching the law the testimonies the commandments or the precepts this was the fault of the Pharisees when they were rebuked in John 5:39 they searched the law to find righteousness rather than the one who is righteous if we search through the law as a way to find righteousness as a way to establish our own righteousness then once again we worship the created rather than the creator we must not seek after our own righteousness but we must instead seek the righteous one with our whole heart as

David says in Psalm 119 verses 1 and 2 and the reward the reward I think David was speaking of is that the law and the commandments of the Lord they become more to be desired than gold and sweeter than honey because it's through them that we come to know God himself it is God that we find in his law not a way to our own righteousness from the writings of Moses the Pentateuch the first five books to the Psalms to the writings of the prophets and even the gospels we find that there is again an infinity of infinities to be explored within God's word that will never be fully understood or marveled but through which we come to know God himself through them we come to know who God is how he loves we come to a knowledge of his holiness holiness and so we're called to love the

Lord with all our heart and mind and strength and to love others because that is the very nature of God himself we love God by imitating him those who love the Lord love his word I was going to cross reference all of Psalm 119 but I'll just reference you to all of Psalm 119 his words are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path those who know the Lord they delight to do his commandments repeated again and again in Psalm 119 his commandments they're not a burden they are a delight to the one who knows the Lord so having reflected upon the glory of God that was revealed in nature the glory of God that was revealed in scripture knowing God in nature knowing God in scripture David's gaze turns inward in verse 12 and he reflects upon his own heart and so in point three

I'm going to title this one knowing God in salvation and look at verses 12 through 14 David begins with the rhetorical question who can discern his error errors right at first I thought this meant who is capable of knowing their errors their hidden faults but I think what he meant by the question was who can know the extent of their sinfulness God but in the consuming light of the holiness of God as revealed through his word David sees the extent of his sinfulness for the first time and so he cries out declare me innocent from hidden faults he knows it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God but he also knows that it is

[ 30 : 42 ] God alone who has the power and the authority to forgive sins likewise he knows it is God alone who can rescue his heart from the desires from the slavery to sin and so he prays for protection from his presumptuous insolent sinful desires and from the dominion that sinful desire has in his life he no longer wants to be a slave to sin realizing that his sin keeps him from truly knowing the living God he prays that he would be freed from sin and that his heart would be bound to God and so he prays in verse 14 let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight oh Lord David desires that the words of his mouth we know the words of our mouth they are the overflow of our heart he longs that the words of his mouth would be acceptable before

God but he also desires that the meditation of his heart be singular the meditation of my heart therefore a heart fully devoted to the Lord God we know through God's commandment we know from Matthew 15:19 that the heart of man overflows with evil thoughts with murder with adultery with sexual immorality with theft with false witness and with slander that is the overflow of man's heart but David longs to know the Lord in a way that is acceptable in his sight and so he recognizes that this is impossible for man but that entrusting in God that it is possible for his rock and his redeemer right before psalm 19

David calls God his rock his fortress his deliverer his shield the horn of his salvation the one in whom he takes refuge but now in psalm 19 he calls him by a new name redeemer David knows as God revealed himself in Exodus 34 that he is merciful and gracious slow to anger abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness he forgives iniquity and transgression and sin so by meditating on the law of God David has faith that the Lord would hear his prayer would change his heart would change his desires and would redeem him from the dominion of sin in fact Paul commends him in

Romans 4:6 because he saw that even David was redeemed by faith that even David was declared righteous through faith in God when he prayed as Paul quotes blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity as we see in Psalm 32 verse 1 having looked at Psalm 19 I want to conclude by giving us a little bit broader of a picture than David was able to paint from his perspective I read this psalm often and I have an over active imagination so I like to imagine what it was like for David writing this psalm I don't know when in his life he wrote it but in my mind he wrote it when he was young when he was a shepherd when he was in Bethlehem staring up at the night sky he was reminded of

God's promises right in the night sky he sees the stars he sees God's creation but then dawn begins to break and so in the early morning light the glory of God is revealed to him in the heavens he's reminded how faithfully the sun rises from day to day a reminder of God's own faithfulness throughout his word in his heart he's reminded of God's law of God's precepts of God's perfect holiness but also of God's perfect steadfast love he's reminded that God keeps faithful loyal love to his children even when they again and again fail him but I think finally he's caught off guard by the sunrise when the first rays hit him he sees his sinfulness in light of God's holiness and he cries out for forgiveness in those first glimmers of sunrise he sees the radiance of the glory of God he sees the redeemer's face

[ 36 : 36 ] David delighted in the law of the Lord because in it he found the Lord himself the author of life but we have a more perfect picture of God revealed in Jesus Christ the word has become flesh it dwells among us we have seen the glory of the Son from the Father full of grace and truth he is the radiance of the glory of God God the exact imprint of his nature he has completed every righteous requirement of the law why because the law is a reflection of his own character he offered himself as an acceptable final sacrifice for sin and he showed and he showed his love for us by dying for us and in dying for us he showed us the love of God it's by simple faith in him that we receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life and in him there is great joy to be found in God's presence but as with David to know joy to know

God we must know his word so I would encourage you listen to his word often sit under the faithful teaching of the words the sound words of Jesus Christ a reliable bible teacher rent when you can listen to God's word as much and as often as you can make a habit of reading the word of God daily meditate upon his scriptures throughout the day if you read the bible in the morning try to reflect on at least one truth two or three times throughout the day until your heart truly knows it if you struggle perhaps you've read his word a hundred times and you struggle to do it again pray pray like David did in psalm 119 verse 36 incline my heart to your testimony or in verse 18 open my eyes to see wonder in your word or like he did in psalm 86 unite my heart to fear your name or like he did in psalm 90 verse 14 satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love more than this we must regularly sit and study the word of god with others with one another in bible studies one on one small groups wherever we can however we can we must be satisfied with the word of god to us it must be more desirable than gold even much fine gold because in it we find the one who is more desirable than anything this life has to offer let's pray do though if you have there to happen