

## Psalm 19

Just 2 weeks ago we were looking at Psalm 8 where David says <sup>1</sup> LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens."

I was saying how all too often I can live my life 'head down' not looking up - forgetting the heavens. We thought also of how our bright electric lights have dimmed our view of the stars in the night sky and that is a terrible shame because the heavens and the stars have a message for us.

We hear their message today in the words of Psalm 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God." God you are amazing they say, God you are wonderful, God you are bigger than I can imagine!

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. <sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. <sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. <sup>4</sup> Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

David is saying something amazing here. He is saying that if we will but lift up our heads and listen then there is a message for us to hear - a message that is broadcast equally to every human on the planet. Yes, God is amazing, but also we are not here by chance we are not random bits of matter, there is a Creator who has made the universe and we are his creatures!

Let me read you some words from NASA:

From the dawn of humankind to a mere 400 years ago, all that we knew about our universe came through observations with the naked eye. Then Galileo turned his telescope toward the heavens in 1610. The world was in for an awakening.

Saturn, we learned, had rings. Jupiter had moons. That nebulous patch across the center of the sky called the Milky Way was not a cloud but a collection of countless stars. Within but a few years, our notion of the natural world would be forever changed.

[Moving on 390 years from Galileo] On April 24, 1990, the Space Shuttle Discovery lifted off from earth with the Hubble Space Telescope nestled securely in its bay. The following day, Hubble was released into space, ready to peer into the vast unknown of space, offering mankind a glimpse upon distant, exotic cosmic shores yet to be described.

Hubble is the first major optical telescope to be placed in space, the ultimate mountaintop. Above the distortion of the atmosphere, far far above rain clouds and light pollution, Hubble has an unobstructed view of the universe. Scientists have used Hubble to observe the most distant stars and galaxies as well as the planets in our solar system.

It is amazing what we can see, breathtaking and beautiful tremendous and terrifying!

Here are some images just for fun!

- Butterfly - a dying star in our own galaxy
- A flurry of stars 16000 light years from earth
- A barred spiral galaxy 6m light years away

Are they random, accidents? Is it an accident that we can see them? Psalm 19 says they are the work of God's hands and they are speaking to us of the Creator.

Before Galileo, the object we could see the best and which was (and is) quite glorious is of course our star - the sun. No wonder then David gives it special attention.

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. <sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

Sun light takes 8 minutes to cover the 93 million miles and reach earth, yet we can still find it too hot. It is so large that if you could fit roughly a million planet earth's inside it! I read this week, that **The official definition of a star like The Sun is a "Yellow G2 Dwarf." It is an average, middle-aged star.**

I also discovered that **If the Sun were any different to how it is now, life on Earth would not exist. It is the perfect size, perfect age, perfect distance, perfect temperature and perfect brightness for life to exist on a planet like Earth.**

It deserves celebrating, yet the One who put it there for our benefit, who got all the calculations just right, did not stop there...

I find it fascinating that David turns his praise next to the instructions that the people of Israel had received from God about how to live their lives on this amazing planet.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The advertisers would love a product that could deliver all these... refreshing for the soul, wisdom for the simple, joy to the heart and light to the eyes (!) and yet we are offered it freely by the One who made us... and it has been available for thousands of years.

I wonder are you getting it into your system? If it were a gel you would shower with it every day. If it were a pill you would pop it without fail. If it were a drink you would be sure to ingest it. If it were a cream you would apply it regularly. But when did you last make time to read the Bible on your own?

Other priorities cut in on us, other things - yes especially things - and other experiences consume our time. We believe that we can put off our time with God or that we can meet the needs of our soul by other means.

We believe the advertisers of inferior goods, we think short cuts can be found, we don't care from whom we buy as long as get what we want... precious things and sweet things... does it matter if they are not that pure, if they are a little dodgy?

Listen to David again:

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure, and all of them are righteous. <sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

David is called something amazing by God - he is described to us as "a man after God's own heart" in spite of his failures. He knew and showed that what mattered most (even for a King) was friendship with God. The One who made the heavens, the One who placed the sun in the right place and set up life on earth for us, the One who wants us to know how best to live our lives... that amazing God holds out the hand of friendship to us.

Respecting Him (that is what fear means here) is pure and eternal. The instructions he gives us are steadfast and righteous. In keeping them and in walking in friendship with him there are the most precious and the sweetest experiences of life.

In the ancient world, gold was unrivalled; it still trades pretty well today - on Friday just under £22,000 per kilo as far as I could see.

As King, David had plenty of Gold - he gave 100 tones of it for use in the Temple that Solomon would build. Today a tone of gold would be worth £22 million, so he gave £2.2 billion pounds worth. But he ranked God's instructions on living as more precious, even than much pure gold.

Again in the ancient world, before the discovery of sugar cane and sugar beet, honey was the most prized sweetener (I still think it is the best).

King David, would have had access to it whenever he wanted and the best food in the country... but he ranked living life God's way as sweeter still.

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. <sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. <sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

He had learned, sometimes the hard way, the value of being warned and the reward of doing things in the right order. He knew the human bias to error and hidden wrongs, the terrible willfulness that leads to bad choices...

Best of all, as I hope we are learning, David had learned his friendship with God mattered most and he did not want anything to spoil that friendship.

So the Psalm closes: <sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.