

Knowing God | Psalm 19
Spiritual Change starts with seeing differently
1.21.2017

Introduction

In 1955 a young man named Andy was pulling his car up to the border of Romania very nervous he would be arrested because in the trunk of the car was a stack of bibles. the Bible was illegal in Romania and all other countries under totalitarian control at the time. For the past 1700 years this book has been seen by many nations as a powerful dangerous threat that will upend their whole way of life.

Because the Bible at its core is a story about a king who claims authority over every square inch of earth. A story where anyone, regardless of their social standing or past failures or race...anyone can find salvation, life, and purpose. A story that makes slaves and kings equals in the eyes of a scandalous God who died to pay for the sins of the very people who rejected him.

Andy would make it through the Romanian border. And on the other side of it he would find christians who collapsed & wept with joy at the sight of these bibles. Andy became known as Brother Andrew...the man who smuggled bibles for years into countries where it was illegal to own one. This book was that valuable, that essential to the survival and thriving of the church. The story on these pages breathed life into the persecuted church in Andrew's day and it still does in persecuted churches around the world today.

Today we are going to open this sacred book and look at Psalm 19. This psalm has changed me & how I look at God and the world around me more than any other psalm.

This Psalm lays out a claim that God has made himself known to us. You want to know God? Good news God has decided to make himself knowable. And that's why the persecuted church craves access to a bible. Because, and this is our main idea today, **The way to know God is to know the bible.**

That's the big idea for today. And if that sounds overly simple, good. It's not intended to be flashy. I had a more poetic version of this sermon but felt like we need to just sit here today. And here's why: Because you came in here in one of two camps. Either you are not a Christian or you are one. If you are not a Christian, well I think if you really want to explore what we believe you need to know where to find it. And you find it in the bible. And if you are a Christian, then you've said you believe this to be God's very words. But do you KNOW them? I believe we need to be re-awakened to the power & beauty of God's word today. And right at the heart of this most impressive Psalm is a majestic exalting of the word of God. One that I hope will affect our hearts and direct our church.

Ok let's jump in cause we are going to read this whole thing. I'm just going to walk through it and I'm going to show you how the bible reveals God to us and how we respond. BUT FIRST, we gotta start with 6 verses that

seem like they have nothing whatsoever to do with the bible. Ready? Good.

[1] The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

[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.

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.

We are going to get to the bible but I find it fascinating that David doesn't start there. Instead he delivers an incredibly rich commentary on the sky above.

By saying if you want to know something about God, start by looking up. See the skies are God's opening pages in his book about himself. Go to page 1 of your bible and you will read the very first thing he created were the heavens. And he spared no expense doing it. He didn't create a small sky. He created something man could explore forever and never reach the ends of.

NASA office of space science says *Our sun, the nearest star, is 93 million miles away. That's why the sun, which is a million times the size of the Earth, looks so small. It would take the Space Shuttle seven months to fly there. our star and its planets are just one small part of the Milky Way galaxy. The Milky Way is so big that even at the speed of light, it would take 100,000 years to travel across it.*¹

David says all of that vast expanse of stars and galaxies is there for a purpose. It isn't just static material. The heavens are actually messengers. They are declaring the glory of God. That's their message. Not just big, but beautiful. Like a masterful piece of art.

Friend who has her phd in art history. Basic art interp theory: to understand the art you must get know the artist. But you can never truly know the artist unless you study his art. Because his art tells you something his bio never could about him. David is saying in verse 1 God is the artist and the heavens are his artwork. And so if you want to know about God take a look at his work.

College student you can think well as a Christian. High School student too.

¹ NASA Office of Space Science "How Big is Our Universe?" accessed online at http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/5-8/features/F_How_Big_is_Our_Universe.html.

Now, I know that there are some who will say the idea that God created everything has been disproved by scientific study. They will say it is a sign of weak-mindedness to attribute the unexplainable complexity of creation to “God.” Basically faith is for those who refuse to think. To be fair, there have been times where Christians refused to hear obvious scientific fact because it contradicted their biblical theories. When Galileo proved that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system, the church refused to hear it and put him in prison. But science has committed the same error before. Any scientific investigation that assumes, from the outset, that the divine is to be dismissed commits the same error. That is a huge step of blind faith. Both of these extremes, which still exist today, pit science and faith against each other when God intended exactly the opposite.

Francis Collins, head of the NIH and the guy that mapped the human genome, is arguably the most reputable scientist of our day. He’s also decidedly Christian. When talking on this apparent conflict he said:

“As a scientist who's also a believer, the chance to uncover the incredible intricacies of God's creation is an occasion of worship. To be able to look, for the first time in human history, at all three billion letters of the human DNA--which I think of as God's language--it gives us just a tiny glimpse into the amazing creative power of his mind.”²

Francis Bacon, Albert Einstein, and many other great scientists before Collins believed Faith and Science to be two garrison’s of the same army fighting to declare the glory of God to you. God doesn’t reveal himself in contradiction to scientific study, God reveals his glory **through** scientific study. So LOOK UP! The further you look the more of God you see. So in all of this, here’s our question for really these first 6 verses:

Is your view of God worthy of who the heavens say he is?

The heavens say he is all powerful. He created the Milky Way galaxy and he created the complexities of the atom. he breathed life into man. He is the all powerful, all knowing, sovereign king of the universe. Is that how you see God? Or is he an abstract being you believe is supposed to make sure your life here is comfortable and free from hard times.

You notice who is absent from the first 6 verses? You. That might be your biggest takeaway today. I’ll tell you right now one of the most dangerous, most subtle problems with a lot of Christianity right now is the kind that is centered around you. Where its all about you. Like your problems are going to get smaller by giving YOU more attention and only talking about God in terms of what he can do for you. How God can help you live your best life now. That’s not the God of the bible,

² Francis Collins. “God is not threatened by our scientific adventures.” accessed at <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Science-Religion/2006/08/God-Is-Not-Threatened-By-Our-Scientific-Adventures.aspx?p=2>

that's a spiritual butler designed to make you feel happy.

Ok now listen...these first 6 verses that I've taken so much time on...They are a set-up. A set-up for what is coming. Because they are saying you can know something ABOUT God through the heavens. BUT, you can't know him. The best way I could think about it is that David is saying the Sun, moon, & stars...they heavens...They are a big neon sign saying "TO MEET THE ONE WHO CREATED ALL THIS, READ THE BIBLE!!"

That's why this Psalm is all one Psalm. For David, there is no hard switch of thought between creation and the bible. It is a seamless transition to go from talking about what God created to talking about the word of God itself. And here is what he says

[7] The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; [8] the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; [9] the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether; [10] More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. [11] Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:7-11

I told you the language of this Psalm is rich. It's dripping with metaphor and that is fully on display in these verses about God's law. I mean think about how he talks

about the "law.. He's talking about the laws in OT books like Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy that aren't always the most compelling devotional reads to a lot of us.

let's take a well known example like the 10 commandments. He says thou shalt not bear false witness. So no lying ever about anything. Ok now I can RESPECT that law right? Because if we all abide by them that would be good for us. We'd all be honest. But just because I respect the law doesn't mean I find the law to be "delicious." Like mmmm give me those commandments.

In fact I often feel the opposite. My sin wants to do the opposite of what the law tells me to do. Now the law is good for me as a restraint. By following it I keep myself from destruction, but just because I appreciate the value doesn't necessarily mean it is dark chocolate truffles to me right? Here's what has happened. David has very carefully crafted this psalm and he's done so after learning what it is like to walk with God through some real life experiences. And he's crafted these words like an open door to say here...the reason they are so good is because they introduce you to God himself!!

My goal is simple like I said in the beginning today: the way to know God is to know the bible. And where David says "law" I'm including all of the bible because the NT confirms that it is God's word as well. 1 Tim 3.16-17. 2 Peter 1.20-21 "men moved by HS spoke from God."

David's 5 reasons you should read the Bible:

1. God's word revives the soul - (v7) I'm going to go ahead and tell you this may be the biggest thing here. The word of God REVIVES the SOUL! Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone but by the word of God. John 20.21 - these things (the bible) were written so that you may believe and by believing have LIFE in his name. How many of you Christians did God use his WORD to totally overhaul your life? For me? It was Romans 3.23 - all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. I was a good person who came face to face with...I need a savior. And then Romans 6.23 says his name is Jesus. I learned this when a friend showed it to me...IN THE BIBLE. And it doesn't just give life, it also restores it. Some of you are in a dry and weary place and God feels distant and I'm telling you HIS WORD IS YOUR ACCESS POINT. IT IS WATER TO YOUR SOUL. IT HAS THE LIFE YOU ARE LONGING FOR. Get in there and do not leave it.
2. God's word gives God's wisdom - We see this in verse 7 & also 2nd half of verse 8. Making wise the simple, enlightening the eyes. You do not need to be "smart" to be wise. This wisdom David calls "sure." Which means reliable. It's his way of saying you can stand on this foundation and it will hold up. And often that looked crazy to the world. When we choose to obey God's command to give away our money or to love our enemies... these things seem foolish to someone trying to secure their own future. I long for us to TRUST

God's word over our own instincts. To believe that how God says to live is actually what is best for us. I've had professing Christians seek counsel saying "God wants me to be happy! Or 'I feel called to follow my heart.'" And I have to say "Your God is Walt Disney." Your heart is wicked and since when is God cool with sin being ok if it makes you happy? You are believing a LIE! And almost always conversations like that are with people who just haven't spent time in God's word. TRUE, GOOD WISDOM is here for you! And you can trust it!

3. God's word gives joy to its reader - (8) I don't fully know how to fully explain this to you. When you read God's word a story comes out. That story is that you who rebelled against God have been offered salvation from your sin. And that salvation, when rightly understood, leads us to joyful worship. We'll talk about that in a second. But there is something else here in verse 8 - the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. Verse 10 says There is a sweetness to it that makes it more enjoyable than the most delicious food on earth.

I Read the story of Ruth and I see the beautiful redemption God brings to her and I think man, this is God speaking to me about the redemption he offers me! And all of the sudden I'm getting choked up because I realize my redeemer has come for me even though I'm a wretch. I read the woman at the well and realize I have given myself away to other

gods. I'm her. And Christ offers forgiveness! New Identity! I'm not worthy of it but he gives it to me.

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. And wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned unclean. "How marvelous How Wonderful and my song shall ever be, how marvelous how wonderful is my savior's love for me." And STORY AFTER STORY OF GOD'S LOVE FOR YOU IS HERE IN THE BIBLE!!! I'VE CRIED TEARS OF HAPPINESS OVER THESE PAGES BECAUSE I'VE FOUND JOY UNMATCHED BY ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD. John 15.11 - these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full.

4. God's word is more valuable than gold ³⁻ (10) This one doesn't need a lot of translation work. If you have to choose between the word of God and gold, choose God's word. If you have to choose between God's word and much fine gold...choose God's word. If you have to choose between God's word and bitcoin...choose God's word. The benefits of knowing and doing the word of God are greater than all that money can buy.

So listen if you find yourself trying to decide between knowing God's word and checking your work email...or maybe checking the market...or doing whatever you think will get you ahead a little in the \$. Turn back to God's word! I read

one pastor who said: It's like the child who chooses the penny over the dime because it's bigger. Adults look on and shake their heads and try to teach children how to see what is really more valuable. That is no doubt the way the angels in heaven look down at childish businessmen who study the stock market before they study the Bible. There is a difference however: the benefits of the Word of God over the benefits of gold are far greater than ten to one.

5. God's word warns you against sin: verse 11 is an important juxtaposition. [11] Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. God warns us against sin. It shows us how vulnerable we, like adam & eve, are to be deceived by the lies of satan. So I'm warned against attack, but also given reward as I obey them. Because listen in obeying Hebrews 3.13 to exhort one another every day so that my heart is not hardened against the deceitfulness of sin... when I do that...the great reward is a depth of friendship I can only experience within the family of God. And God has given me such close friendships when I make that jump. Or every time I choose forgiveness with my friends and family - I'm protected against bitterness but also relationships are made stronger. REWARD. This is the power of God's word at work in real life!

³ Much of this point was inspired by John Piper's comment on vv10-11 in his sermon 'sweeter than honey, better than gold.'

I've just given you 5 reasons from these 5 verses. And I'm summarizing. There are easily 5 more you could pull. But it goes back to the big idea: **The way to know God is to know the bible!**

Do you cherish the bible as if it really contains the words of the living God? I'm not asking if you are kind of bible trivia ok. Knowing facts about God is not the same as knowing God. That's our whole point in this series. But do you crave this word like it is food for your soul?

I think a real danger facing our church, and many young growing churches like ours, is that we don't know the bible. I want this to be a year where Mercy Church walks with God. We will be taking big steps of faith this year and we need, each one of us, to draw closer to God than we ever have before. But you cannot know God apart from the bible! There are a couple of things we are doing to try and help you get comfortable reading the bible. The best bible reading is the kind that happens

- Reading Plan - on our website. Will walk you through the foundational passages of scripture and introduce you to God. Just follow the plan. only 5 days per week.
- Equip Forum - Feb 22 - I'll be teaching a session on how to read your bible. More to come there.
- Parents - Gotta give our kids God's word. Jesus Storybook Bible. Ask our kids team for one. If we don't have them we can tell you how to get one.

Ok I gotta show you how this all connects:

[12] Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. [13] 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. [14] Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

In light of the Majesty and Goodness of God, David becomes aware of his own less than perfect self. He's not as big as the heavens and he's not as perfect as the law. He just can't measure up to God in any way. Like comparing lipton canned tea to Courtney's home made sweet tea. It just doesn't compare. Its terrible compared to the golden-brown sugary nectar that is my wife's sweet tea.

David is wise. He sees that it is his sin that makes him flawed. And the perfection of God exposes his own flaws. That's what God's law does. It reveals your sin because it reveals where you and God don't line up. And so David prays...Who can discern his errors? Who can see them! HELP ME! Keep me back from them. Then david says...

Let them NOT have dominion over me. And there is the lynchpin of David's prayer. David alone cannot free himself from the dominion of his sin. It runs his life. But he wants to be free so that he can be acceptable to this Glorious & Good God. So David does all he knows to do... he asks God for deliverance from his sin. He throws himself at God's mercy.

The apostle Paul had the same problem David had. In Romans 7 he says The law that should have brought life instead brought death. It was like a legal document that read his condemnation to him. And that's how so many people see the bible. A code that if you break it, you are condemned. And you know what, in a sense you are right.

The law by itself condemns us. See Creation shows you there is a God whose glory is unmatched, and his word shows you that he is good, and both show you that you are unworthy of that God. That's what David is saying in vv 12-14. He needs redemption. So David prays to his redeemer. And if the redeemer finds his prayer acceptable, he will redeem him. He will no longer be guilty of great transgression.

Ya'll this word of God is at its core a story about the one who answered David's prayer. It's the story about Jesus who said though you have sinned and fallen short of God...this God loves you! And he wants you back! You are the prodigal son and he is the father with his arms open wide. You are the one lost sheep and he is the shepherd coming to find you. The one lost coin. The bible is mini-story after mini-story, parable after parable, either pointing to or reflecting on the cross of Jesus Christ where once and for all Jesus paid the price for your sin.

LOVE put him on the cross! God's goodness is ours in that the bible that once told us how perfect God was and how flawed we were...Now tells us about the Character of the Father who loves us. That incredible

God...is our Father! And even when we fall short...The things it says about him never change. So of course it's better than honey. Because its God's LOVE FOR ME! That he gives me life! All the promises in scripture start to open up to me because I am free from condemnation!

Christian...has that become old hat to you?

WORSHIP HIM TODAY! Non Christian...he paid the price for your sin but you have to give your life to him. You have to receive his salvation. It's a gift and a gift has to be received. Receive it today. He offers you salvation! Forgiveness. A new life. He created life by his word and John 1 says the word became flesh. Jesus is life and you can have life in him today.