



*Sweeter
than
Honey*

D E V O T I O N A L 1



CHRIST
CHURCH

Psalm 19:1-11

- 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.
- 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.

Day 1

PSALM 19:1-2

- 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.

In preparation for writing this devotional, I watched several clips of “The Heavens are Telling the Glory of God” on YouTube. This song is probably the best-known work from Joseph Haydn’s oratorio, *The Creation*. I was amazed at all the different renditions from all over the world. A black choir from South Africa sang with an orchestra made up of all white people. How did that happen? There was a statewide high school honors choir from Iowa. There were other choirs from Singapore, Dubai, Ghana, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and various cathedrals throughout the world. All the accents were marvelous. Mostly, the choristers had the work memorized. Through these choirs, thousands of people in various audiences throughout the world have been reminded of God’s glory in creation.

How beautifully the widespread singing of this great choral work illustrates itself. The fact that an eighteenth-century composer from Austria penned a work that the whole Christian world now embraces points to the truth that the world recognizes. As Paul declares in Romans 1, we can know God because he has made himself known through his creation. We can see what God has made simply by observing the world around us. Sunrises and sunsets happen because of how he made our universe. God’s words of creation are responsible for the rhythms of the seasons we experience all the time. The wind and rain and sun that we encounter every day exist because God was there creating them and is still there sustaining the system. We can all see creation by walking out our front doors. The works of God’s hands are everywhere we look. This truth about God transcends culture, race, and nationality.

But his creation isn’t a closed system out there in space gradually winding down from its creation. We also are an active part of his creation and, as such, we have the great honor of sharing in its glory. We glorify God by being good citizens of this world. We get to sing songs of praise with vocal cords that he created in us. We get to be stewards of this creation, caring for it as gardeners. We get to enhance God’s creation by being sub-creators, creating our own works of art and literature that reflect his glory.

Finally, we get to grow during our whole lives in understanding what God is doing in this world a little more each day. There are great mysteries in God’s universe we don’t understand. But we know God wants to reveal himself to us, and we honor and glorify him by seeing and responding to all of his self-revelation.

From the Message: Psalm 19:1-2

*God’s glory is on tour in the skies,
God-craft on exhibit across the horizon.
Madame Day holds classes every morning,
Professor Night lectures each evening.*

Prayer

Father, open our eyes every day to see your glory. Help us not to take your creation for granted. Give us a greater understanding of your creation and how we fit into it. As we witness your creation, may we be witnesses to the people around us, reminding them of what you have done and the marvelous opportunity we still have to be a part of it.

Day 2

PSALM 19:3-5

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.

One of my favorite poems is *God's Grandeur* by Gerard Manley Hopkins. It speaks of the intricacies of God's world and the beauty that exists in and through it. In Psalm 19, the foundation for our sermon series "Sweeter than Honey" on Psalm 119, we are presented with an image of God's creation receiving the message (see Romans 10:18-19). What message? In these two psalms, the psalmist is giving testimony to the power, efficacy, and grandeur of God's Word. The psalmist in Psalm 19 declares that the Torah, the law and scriptures of the people of Israel at the time, was perfect. There is a delight in these words that lands in one's life and is sweeter than honey (v. 10). The two poems, *God's Grandeur* and Psalm 19, speak in flowing language that reveals the beauty, majesty, detail, and expanse of God's world.

Why does this matter? Why use such eloquent words to explain a book with words in it? Because this is more than just a book. The Bible is a gateway to the story that God is telling and an invitation to come along with him. Inside these words is a relationship with God. For some of us, it's the relationship of our lifetime, spanning decades and lasting from some of our first moments to our very last. For others, it's a new relationship. We are still figuring out how the nuances to what God is like work. One reason I love the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins is because of the God he describes. It's the same God you find in the Bible. He's full of brilliance, glory, expression, and care. He's a God of honor, steadfastness, grace, tenderness, justice, and virtue. This is the God of the Bible, with whom you and I can meet and commune.

Read Psalm 19 and *God's Grandeur* all the way through. Spend 5-10 minutes writing down everything you notice about God. Who is he? What might he be like? What are some of his characteristics? How does he act? Then pray those things back to him. He has invited you onto his stage, to encounter him with great joy.

God's Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Day 3

PSALM 19:6

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.

The sun seems like such a normal, common thing. Every day, if it isn't cloudy, we see it rise in the east and set in the west. It is another one of those mundane facts of life. Winter is cold and summer is warm. The sky is blue and grass is green. The sun emits light and heat that makes life possible. Every evening it goes down as night falls. Every morning the sun rises and the day begins to warm up.

But when we stop and think about these things, we begin to realize how beautiful and amazing every little detail of our world is. We learn why it is that our world has seasons, how trees grow, and what the sun does for the earth.

When was the last time you stopped to smell the roses? When was the last time you stopped and examined and appreciated this creation God has made?

Sometimes parts of the Bible can become so familiar that we take them for granted. But when we take the time to stop and dwell on how beautiful God's Word is and how wonderful his creation is, we can come to appreciate the majesty and the goodness of it all.

In this series, we will be meditating on God's Word. We will take a close look at the wonder and beauty of his special revelation to us. The sun's light and heat are penetrating, but we know that the Word of God cuts deeper. It is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

The Scriptures are God's living word. By them we know our creator, our fallen nature, and how our relationship with the living God can be restored. Our God, from whom we cannot hide, is ever-present throughout the creation he has made and filled. He has given us this word for our salvation and that we might live holy lives before him.

So as we begin this examination of Scripture, you are invited to stop and appreciate that these are God's words that we are reading, speaking, and singing. Remember that Scripture is not mundane and should not be taken for granted.

Stop, pray through Scripture, meditate on it. This is God's inspired word for us.

Prayer

Lord God Almighty, fill our heart with your Word. Make it to dwell in us and shape us. May your Word warm our hearts as the sun warms our faces. Throughout all creation, may we remember that we are not without you, and you give us comfort and joy, the likes of which no cloud and no night can take away.

Day 4

PSALM 19:7-9

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.

God is always speaking, always revealing himself! We have already seen how his voice is heard in the grandeur and glory of creation in large and small, loud and quiet ways. And we have seen how his voice is inclusive and continuous—day and night, every location, every time in history—leaving us without excuse. No one will ever be able to claim they were not present when that message was spoken.

But God also has another language, the language of personhood and relationship. We can learn a lot about someone by observing what they do. But if we really want to know them, we have to spend time listening to their thoughts, hopes, and experiences. We have to open ourselves to know and be known in mutual self-giving. So God has initiated such a relationship, inviting us into sonship and friendship through his written Word, the Bible.

David is effusive in his gratitude for God's personal, life-giving revelation. He can't be satisfied with a general description, but wants us to see its full beauty by looking at facets of the diamond that is God's Word. These are the ones he describes:

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

David is not just thinking of the Ten Commandments, but of the entire revelation as he knew it. He calls it perfect, not only without error or flaw, but exactly suited to our human needs. David knows our first need is to be revived. The fall left us spiritually dead, unable to respond to God. But even after being made alive, living in this desert world can leave us feeling parched, shriveled like a plant in our garden needing water. God's living Word is powerful to revive us.

Where in your life are you feeling dried up, unable to be fruitful? What word God has irrigated your soul?

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making the simple wise.

Do you sometimes feel confused when facing a decision? Conflicting messages all around can paralyze us. What a comfort and security to know we don't have to understand all life's complexities! We can trust God's Word to give us wisdom for living. And we can trust God's heart to redeem wrong choices.

Where do you most need God's wisdom today? How has fellowship with other believers helped you make wise decisions?

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

God's covenant with his people included prescriptions for their behavior that would result in flourishing. The culture around us resists being told what to do, a position that appeals to our sinful nature. But God gave precepts because he was a Good Shepherd, taking responsibility for his sheep. The well-worn paths a shepherd followed were called "right paths" or "paths of righteousness." Staying away from crooked, dangerous paths brought protection and provision. As God's sheep, we experience joy when we follow his righteous ways.

What wrong decisions in your experience have made you thank God for showing you his right paths? Where have you found joy in taking the harder, life-giving way?

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

When we say something is pure, we mean two things: it is free from corruption, and it is undivided. God himself is pure because there is no evil or double-mindedness in him. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). We will never discover a dark side to God, something deceptive, malicious, or partial. We can trust him to give light as we walk through a dark world.

Think of some of God's commandments and reflect on how they are light. What has been the fruit of times you've tried to serve two masters?

The fear-of-the-Lord is clean, enduring forever.

One theologian has called fear-of-the-Lord a bound phrase, meaning the words can't be separated. This fear is the starting point, the fundamental position of a regenerated heart; it is a humble, awe-filled respect for who God is, and what he does. And as the alphabet is never outgrown as we become adult communicators, so we never graduate from fear-of-the-Lord. This keeps us in/ under the Word of God that endures forever because it is not from this temporary, corrupted world. Fear of man, our other choice, originates from this world, and will be "like chaff that the wind drives away" (Psalm 1:4).

The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

David grounds his reflections in God's character: He is true and righteous. True because he is Ultimate Reality and leads us to Life; righteous because he brings us into a right relationship with himself and one another. This is the joy and satisfaction we are seeking.

David had found what he was seeking! He exulted in God's Word because Israel, out of all the nations, knew how to live, how to find acceptance with God. Have you been thinking about how much more revelation we have? Have you been thinking about what an honor we have to be chosen to carry this light into our dark world? Have you been revived as you meditate on this song of faith? Here we can find our true purpose, to love God and enjoy him forever!

Prayer

Loving Father, we want to join David's joy and thanks today! We love your Word! We are simple, often foolish and fickle. Your Word makes us wiser than enemies, more insightful than teachers, and gives more understanding than those who have lived a long life. We ask you to revive us again through the words you have spoken, and fill us with the joy that gives strength to keep following, to keep sharing your words of life. Thank you for loving us and bringing us into relationship with you and one another through Jesus. We ask in his name. Amen

Day 5

PSALM 19:10-11

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.

This week we've looked at Psalm 19 as a summary of and preparation for our upcoming study of Psalm 119 together. Today we come to the phrases *more to be desired are they than gold and [they are] sweeter also than honey*. And the "they" is referring to the law/testimony/precepts/commandment/fear/rules of the Lord that we studied yesterday.

In the days of the psalmist they would have known no food sweeter than honey. And no metal would have been more desired than high quality gold (and lots of it). The psalmist says the word of God is better than both gold and honey. So today, let's treasure the word of God.

Some? most? all? of us have guilt (or pride!) over how much time we spend in God's word. Let's confess what we must, receive forgiveness and then consider our relationship with the Word not as a should but as an invitation. Sweeter than honey? Better than lots of high-quality gold? Show us, Lord! Each day we can confess what we need to, receive forgiveness and then know that we are invited to the Word. Consider Isaiah 55:10-11 where God says his word will not return void...

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

God's Word shall accomplish that which he purposes. And it will succeed in the way he wants it to succeed. That's a wonderful, scary promise. There is much to sanctify in each of us. There is much to correct. And God's word gives us that gift when we turn to it. And it is good...sweet...highly desired. That's where today's passage ends: in the beauty of knowing and following God's Word. It warns us by revealing thoughts, actions, and motivations that are self-centered. We are told that it's good to keep his Word.

Spend some time today asking God to grow in your heart the reality of scripture being more desired than gold and sweeter than honey. Know the forgiveness that awaits all who ask for it. Delight in the law of God, and know that it will not return empty.

Prayer

Father, we thank you for the scripture. May we treasure it, individually and in community. May it read us as we read it. Thank you that we don't protect ourselves by hiding from your Word but that we protect ourselves by reading your Word. May we learn what this all means. In the name of Jesus, the living Word. Amen.