

Three Words

Psalm 19

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Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

We have just read Psalm 19 - A Psalm of David in which he is jubilant about how God speaks to us, human beings.

God speaks to us. This in itself is an amazing concept. The idea - and the experience that almighty God actually initiates to communicate with us. In a manner that we can comprehend.

First, David speaks - or rather, he sings, of the world of nature that gives us a glimpse of the glory of God.

Next, David is jubilant about how God speaks through the Law - mediated through Moses.

And as a result, thirdly, he prays to God that our speaking is in line with the speaking of God. Our life must be aligned with how God revealed himself to us.

Let us briefly look at this Psalm and these three points that I mentioned.

1. Nature speaks

First - the heavens declare the glory of God. The sun goes up, the sun goes down, and no one can deny the majesty of God.

David underlines how God has created order in our universe. Without an organising hand behind our reality, the universe would be chaos, it would have collapsed long ago. And everyone understand from this, how great God is.

Look at nature. Yes, there is much cruelty in nature. It is to eat or to be eaten. Death is the most nasty strange element in the universe. But the organisation of it all - of the whole - points to a creator. A glorious creator.



Human sin in general and our abuse of nature has created much mess. But, as St Paul writes to the church in Rome,

...since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.
(Romans 1.20)

God willed creation as a gift addressed to humankind, an inheritance destined for and entrusted to us, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

If we receive this wonderful world as a gift from God for us, that helps us to see the magic of nature. And it shows us how highly God esteems us - you, and me - that he made all this for us to enjoy. We are part of nature, of that whole ecosystem, but we are also above the system; we can study it, we think about it, we can order it.

God in his goodness made our world, and in our world, we are able to discern the hand of the maker. Except if we purposely close our eyes.

Like atheists.

Atheists have chosen a really tough life for themselves; and presently, their percentages are even going down worldwide. 16% of the world population say they are atheists - and most of those live in China where people have suffered 50 years of strong indoctrination.

In the Soviet Union, the Communist Party has tried to stamp out religion, but after having done that for 70 years, with all their best arguments and with harsh treatment of religious people, only 13% of the population of Russia today call themselves atheists.

Last year in the United Kingdom, atheism decreased.

Poor atheists. They are fighting a lost battle.

Just open your eyes. This majestic kosmos and our tiny world, they cannot exist without a maker who also sustains all things. That is why the sun goes up each morning, and goes down each evening.

A few weeks ago I heard a scientist explain to a child on radio about the big bang. We know that the universe is expanding. It grows larger and larger. So, the scientist argued, if you think back in time, the universe must have been smaller. And the further back in time you go, the smaller our universe was. Ultimately, he argued, the universe was nothing but one atom that exploded billions of years ago.

No need for a creator?

When I heard this man talk and argue, I thought - my goodness sir - do you hear what you are saying. For heavens sake, how can you rationally believe that in eternity, there was this one small thing, that existed by itself, exploded by itself, and then came this whole complicated universe, with us, humans, as the thinking summit of creation.

If we would not believe in God, we would have to invent Him. Just look at the world around us.

Nature teaches us that there is an almighty, creative Mind behind all things. This is the language nature speaks.

2. The Law speaks

But, David continues, nature speaks about God, but God has also spoken more directly in his Law. God in his goodness spoke to Israel, and his speech, his laws, reflect his goodness.

As nature proclaims the glory of God, so does the Word that God spoke proclaim his glory.

David spoke obviously, specifically about the laws of Moses. They were a treasure trove of wisdom for Israel and for us.



It is interesting that when the Psalm speaks of God's goodness in nature, the generic word 'God' is used. All people can see something of his divine power and greatness.

But when David speaks of God's Law, seven times he uses the covenantal name Jahweh which God revealed to Israel. To them specifically He gave his laws, the written book about who he is.

We sometimes find these laws of the Old Testament hard to understand, or even harsh, but for David they were the self-revelation of

God. When we look at some of those laws, we do not always know how to deal with them, and sometimes we may feel that they are in a way a contradiction of what we have learned about God from Jesus.

I understand the feeling, but be careful. Jesus himself fully embraced the Laws of Moses. So we cannot put the laws against Jesus. Or Jesus against those laws.

The church has traditionally made a distinction between the different laws of Moses. Some were lasting rules for the people of God - think of the ten commandments. Murder is always wrong.

Other laws were really only intended for the national life of Israel. Laws for that land, like how and when to celebrate the harvest feast.

And then there were so many laws for the temple service that no longer apply - there is no Temple, and Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of those laws.

But in the time of David - all laws were perfect, for the service of God in the land and in the tabernacle.

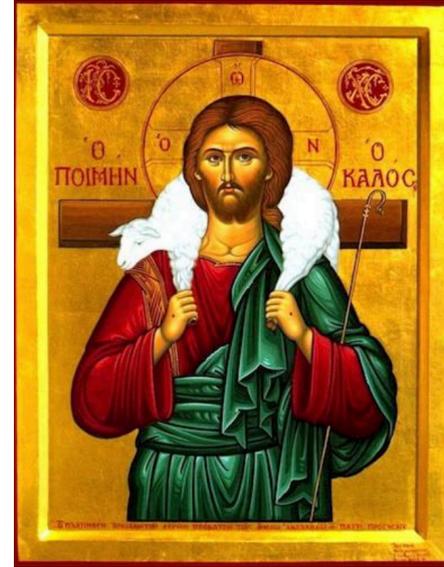
The apostles, after living with Jesus Christ for three years, came to the conclusion that He himself was the truest, the most perfect, the ultimate Speech of God. That is why they called Him the Word, the Logos. The true expression of the God who created this ordered universe.

This does not mean we push the written laws of the Old Testament aside. They still show us something of the greatness of God. But when we look at Jesus, we see God's ultimate self-expression.

David says of the Word of God that it is 'perfect', it 'revives the soul', it 'rejoices the heart', it 'enlightens the eyes', it 'endures forever', 'true', 'righteous altogether', 'more desirable than gold'.

I do not think you have any problem to see how those words apply to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the perfect icon of God - through Him we know who God is - eternal, righteous, loving, always loving.

So nature, the Bible, Jesus Christ, they all point in the same direction of the one God who is just and good and who loves us.



3. We speak

And this reflection on the goodness and the greatness of God - the God who speaks, who reveals himself, brings David finally to ponder his own speech.

We are called by God to align our lives with creation, with his laws, with Jesus Christ.

David prays that his sins may not have dominion over him, and that what he says, yes even what he thinks, may be acceptable for God.

This majestic creator knows very well what goes on in our hearts and in our minds; he sees every step we take.

Some people do not like this transparency at all, and they deny the existence of God. Well, that is the method of the ostrich. Put your head in the sand.

Other people twist the laws of God. "If God is love, he cannot have meant this or that."

I think that all of creation, and the written word of God, and the living Word of God - Jesus Christ- all reveal one and the same God - he is almighty, he is righteousness, he is love.

And when we are confronted by our misunderstandings and shortcomings, is to a good idea to begin where the Psalm of David ends. He says, God you are my Rock and my Redeemer.

We are all messing with nature; we all transgress the laws of God; we do not live a life of kindness and love as Jesus Christ did. But God is our Rock and our Redeemer. He gives us the security and the forgiveness that we all need.

In the light of his lovingkindness for all of us, we can all, without fear, look in the mirror of nature, the law, and Jesus Christ, and admit our sins. But also that we are also truly loved by God.

God showed by creating you, by creating this world, by giving you his word, by his Son for you, that he really really loves you.

That is the basis of our Christian life.

And next, we ask God, like David, please, may my words, and what I think in my heart, be acceptable for you.

God spoke in creation,
God spoke in his law
God spoke in Jesus Christ,
So now it is my turn to speak, and I must do this in a manner that honours God.

Conclusion

Lord, help me to align my life with nature - the world that express your goodness.

Taking care of this world is honoring God. Taking care of nature is honoring God.

And people are the summit of God's nature. So taking care of other people, is the best thing we can do.

And also taking care of animals, of plants, of all things that are threatened. God's goodness is expressed in nature, so we love it.

And Lord, help me to live by your laws.

All the laws of God together, express the goodness of God. They help us to know the creator, and they focus us on loving the human beings he created. Every human being.

And Lord, help me to live by Jesus Christ.

In him, much more clearly than in nature and in the written law, we meet with God.

And what did Jesus show us? To love the Creator-God, and to love his creation - all people.

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight.

If that is how we live, we live in harmony with God. And with the reality he created. And that ultimately, is the lifestyle that makes us incredibly happy people.

That revives the soul. It rejoices the heart. And that makes us endure forever.

+ Amen