

“God Loves You”

Psalm 19, Song of Solomon 2:8-13

September 16, 2012

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The psalmist joyfully sings. **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.”**

The Boundary Waters is a wonderful place to sense creation praising God and revealing God’s love for us. The clear water mirrors the beauty of the lush forest, rocks and sky. The fragrance of pine cleanses the air. Waterbugs dance upon the surface. Eagles soar. Loons sing, swim and dive. Frogs and crickets serenade you to sleep. Wind flexes its strength. Rain tap dances on your tent. Lighting puts on a dazzling show. Thunder contributes booming echoes. The aroma of fresh cut Cedar delights. The campfire mesmerizes with dancing flames, a popping chorus and soothing warmth. A simple paddle stroke sends you gliding across the lake as ripples cheer you on. Food tastes delicious, every morsel robust with flavor. An afternoon swim refreshes as the water hugs your every move. The wide open horizon fills you with peace. God tucks you in for bed by painting the sky orange, yellow, red, pink and purple. God delights so much in showering you with love. God invites you to sneak out of the tent to gaze up at the stars. One moment your senses perceive the radiant stars to be so close you can touch one, the next, you realize the awesome distance of space. Every few minutes a streak of light runs across the sky. The Milky Way glows then bows to show off a constellation. The longer you look, more stars catch your eye with their twinkle. In the morning, God splashes color on the horizon and illumines the beauty of creation as if to ask you: “Do you like it? I have made it just for you so you can be filled with joy, creativity and delight.” God illumines each day with a fresh blast of light. Every day God give us a fresh start to love and live abundantly.

The psalmist exuberantly sings **Psalm 19 “The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display God’s craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make God known. They speak without a sound or word; their**

voice is never heard. Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world. God has made a home in the heavens for the sun. It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race. The sun rises at one end of the heavens and follows its course to the other end. Nothing can hide from its heat. The instructions of the Lord are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are clear, giving insight for living. Reverence for the Lord is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the Lord are true; each one is fair. They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb. They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them. How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

God is glorious! God's works, all of creation, tell us so! God is life giving. God created, sustains and fills the cosmos with goodness. Gerard Hopkins says, "The earth is charged with the grandeur of God." Barrett Browning wrote, "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; And only those who sees take off their shoes; The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

Being a good friend means you are a good listener. You pay attention. Good science is about good observation. At the heart of spirituality is perceiving God's love for you. "Watch," says Jesus over and over again. Pay attention. Give heed. Listen. Observe. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Behold I am knocking on your heart. God is saying "I love you" through the cosmos, surrounding you with family and friends and filling your life with blessings. Pastor Samuel Candler proclaimed, "The glory is that God is not only in the heavens. The glory of God is also inside each one of us. The God who speaks through the universe is also the God who speaks to each of us in the meditation of our hearts. The God who is awesome and glorious, is also the God who is intimate and close—as close to each one of us as our own heart is. If we pay attention, if we watch, if we listen then God is within the intricate process of our own bodies just as gloriously as God is in the heavens."

The twist in Psalm 19 is not that the psalmist sees God in nature, rather that all of creation is preaching to us about God's love. **Psalm 19:1 "The heavens are telling the**

glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork" Are you listening, perceiving? Or are you too busy to see earth crammed with heaven, every common bush afire with God so you merely work, get through the day, exist, pluck blackberries.

Barbara Brown Taylor writes, "I have always known where to go when my own flame was guttering. To lie with my back flat on the fragrant ground is to receive a transfusion of that same power that makes the green blade rise. To remember that I am dirt and to dirt I shall return is to be given my life back again. Where other people see acreage, timber, soil and river frontage, I see God's body... The Creator does not live apart from creation... When I take a breath, God's Holy Spirit enters me."

A few years ago I was in awe in the Grove of Patriarchs in Washington. On an island in the middle of a shimmering blue, bubbling river stands a grove of trees some over 1,000 years old. A few of the Red Cedar and Douglas fir stretch up around 300 feet. For hours I laid on my back looking up at them. Sensing how year after year through drought and flood, hot and cold, they connected with the soil, the air, the sun and moisture to subtly grow. In return they provide homes for thousands of critters, enrich the soil, and trade my carbon dioxide for oxygen. My hope for you is not that you can understand the connection with God I felt there; how I was renewed and filled with the joy and glory of God there; rather my hope for you is that you are finding your own places of holy renewal.

Wendell Berry wrote.

"Great trees, outspreading and upright,
Apostles of the living light.
Patient as stars, they build in air
Tier after tier a timbered choir,
Stout beams upholding weightless grace
Of song, a blessing on this place"

Pastor John Buchanan shared. "I like to remember that Jesus knew the psalms and probably had committed most of them to memory. I like the thought that when Jesus looked up into the night sky, the same words came to him as come to me—"The heavens are telling the glory of God." And that when Jesus walked by the lakeside in the early evening and greeted the fisherman, or when he walked by a field ripe with grain, or when he sipped good wine, ate honest bread, bit into a sweet delicious fruit, or when he saw a dear newborn, the words that came to him were, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it."

A hymn declares. Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning, Born of the one light, Eden saw play! Praise with elation, Praise every morning, God's recreation of the new day!

The cosmos is like one big symphony proclaiming God's glory and God's love for us. God doesn't want us to miss God's love, so God gave us eyes to see creation's beauty, ears to hear it's chorus of praise, taste buds to savor the tastes God made for us, smell to catch the fragrance God sprinkled by our path, touch to feel the embrace of love, minds to be thankful, and hearts to share love. God delights in having us enjoy all God gives us. We are blessed just to be able to perceive.

Psalm 19 moves from the majesty of the universe to the splendor of God's law and word. God the creator speaks to us by name. God gives us laws, rules, commands, directions, and wise ideas to help us live abundantly. God's word to us is perfect and soul refreshing. God's commands are radiant, shining with the splendor of truth, illuminating our way. God's word guides us, helps us make decisions, and enables us to become fully alive.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is being so distracted that one doesn't notice creation preaching, God's word empowering, and God's love invigorating. The palmist concludes **Psalm 19:14b "O Lord my rock and redeemer"**. A rock is a place where you can safely rest and be renewed. You can count on a rock, rely on its eternal stability, and build on its firm foundation. God is our redeemer. We began with God our Creator. We began with the cosmos telling us the glory of God, and end with God renewing, resurrecting, and glorifying all God made. We live in not just an elegant universe, but in a redeemed one. Hope is everywhere.

Scripture does speak of another facet of God's revelation. Sometimes this scripture is band because of it's erotic nature. Sometimes it brings to mind hurts, abuses and distortions rather than the beauty and passion it intends. Normally this scripture is avoided fearing it will be misunderstood. Often scripture has numerous layers of meaning. Song of Solomon speaks of the passionate love of a couple, it speaks of God's passionate love for Israel, it speaks of Jesus' passionate love for you, me, and everyone. **Song of Solomon 2:8-13 "Ah, I hear my lover coming! He is leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills. My lover is like a swift gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he is behind the wall, looking through the window, peering into the room. My lover said to me, "Rise up, my darling! Come away with me, my fair one! Look, the winter is past, and the rains are over and gone. The flowers are springing up, the season of singing birds has come, and the cooing of turtledoves fills the air.**

The fig trees are forming young fruit, and the fragrant grapevines are blossoming. Rise up, my darling! Come away with me, my fair one!””

Homiletics Magazine reflects. “In these verses we see the kind of intimacy that God intended for us to have with God and with one another from the beginning—a relationship where desire and commitment win out over objectification and selfishness.”

Phyllis Tribble suggests that the garden imagery describes the Garden of Eden and the passionate love woven with play, imagination, and delight, enjoyed between God and humanity there. It foreshadows what we will enjoy in heaven but can only dimly perceive today.

God loves us. God longs for us. God has passion for us and desires to be intimately involved with us. Such a sensual scene: bright flowers, sweet songs, succulent fruits and fragrant vines; the beauty of life and love. It is springtime filled with new adventures, new possibilities and a new outlook on life. Can you imagine Jesus leaping over the mountains, bounding over the hills to be with you? God is doing everything God can to make a connection with you. God does not merely accept you, rather God passionately loves you. God invites us to show ourselves, to speak with God and share our life. God invites us to come away and enjoy eternal life together.

Another translation put the words of the lover as; **Song of Solomon 2:10-13 “Get up, my dear friend, fair and beautiful lover—come to me! Look around you: Winter is over; the winter rains are over, gone! Spring flowers are in blossom all over. The whole world's a choir—and singing! Spring warblers are filling the forest with sweet harmony. Lilacs are exuberantly purple and perfumed, and cherry trees fragrant with blossoms. Oh, get up, dear friend, my fair and beautiful lover—come to me! Come, my shy and modest dove—leave your seclusion, come out in the open. Let me see your face, let me hear your voice. For your voice is soothing and your face is ravishing.”** God created, sustains, and renews the cosmos, all to welcome us into God’s loving embrace. Amen