

Adventure Psalm 19, March 7<sup>th</sup>, Third Sunday of Lent.

God of every blessing. I invite you now to shape my soul with your words in the psalms and inspire my life with your works. Teach me to walk with you in your ways and teach me how to pray. Amen. (every Lent Sunday).

CS Lewis said that Psalm 19 was ‘the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.’

The psalms as you know have different types. . There is an additional way to look at them. This was developed by theologian Walter Bruggemann. How the psalms reflect human life. He had three themes: psalms of orientation. Psalms of disorientation. Psalms of new / re-orientation.

Psalms of orientation. Words of praise and prayer that declare God is reliable. Faithful We centre we orientate ourselves. We transcend the noise around us.

The fact is that all of us go through times of hurt, suffering, when the valley of death is close by or walked through. Corona has been very difficult for many people. These generate various emotions inside us. These times are reflected in the psalms of disorientation. This is how faith should be, but our life is not experiencing this; God you are not acting as I expected or hoped or I know you can.

There are times when our lives turn around. Despair is broken through – like a dark day and then the clouds break and the sun shines. You could say this is shown across the days of Holy Week – darkness of Good Friday, and Easter Eve – the temple is destroyed as Jesus said in our gospel - and then day breaks –resurrection, ‘in three days I will rise again’. Our personal Holy Week and then Resurrection comes.

These psalms – of new orientation / re-orientation – affirm God who puts us in a new situation. This may be in terms of attitude or perspective or it may be in an actual change in situation.

Psalm 19 is a psalm of orientation. If you need to remember one word it is Adventure.

1. God wants to be revealed.

In this hymn of praise, we have, you could say, a clear summary of the doctrine of revelation in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. God has made himself known as Creator – v1-6 – the heavens, the skies point to him and show the ‘work of his hands.’ God has made himself known to Israel as the Law Giver. And God reveals himself to the individual as Redeemer ‘*My Rock and my Redeemer.*’

This is where the Adventure begins. God wants to be revealed to us. He is not hiding.

We are not in some swop of the Garden of Eden. Where God is hiding in the bushes, and we, like Adam, are wandering around – where are you?

Creation reveals God’s glory and his work. It isn’t a rare revelation like a solar eclipse. ‘day by day they pour forth speech.’ – every day. And as you sleep tonight – ‘night after night they display knowledge.’ The revelation isn’t limited to a race, a tribe, in fact the revelation is to every people, tribe, language and nation – ‘there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard, their voice goes out into all the world.’

When we read the gospel. Jesus in temple area. Jesus “Through him all things have been made. Without him nothing has been made that has been made.” As John declares right at the start.

So the creation that David points to – was made through Jesus. So you'd think that would be enough, in God's eyes. All can see it, day and night, 24-7, 365, no place hidden from its voice.

Yet that was never enough for God. Right from the start, he is in the Garden, he is revealing himself to the Patriarches and then to the People of Israel, in the Torah. And then 2000 years ago. 'The one through whom all things were made, becomes flesh and makes his dwelling among us.' Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God as Paul declares in his own hymn of praise in Colossian 1.

Jesus comes to seek and save the lost; he comes that his life will be given up, so that all have the opportunity to receive eternal life. But to add to all that wonder, God comes close. He made his dwelling among us.

The message bible translates John 1:14

"The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes." He came close. The glory of the heavens.

John when elderly wrote to churches: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.' Awesome. This is where the psalm invites us into an adventure as we read it – God wants to be revealed, he is not in hiding, he has been revealed through creation, through his word, and also personally, 'my rock and my redeemer' David shouts.

Adventure begins. God wants to be revealed to you. And this is not just for salvation. But ongoing, throughout your life.

## 2. Adventure in us.

The Message Bible translates the opening verses. "God's glory is on tour in the skies, God craft on exhibit across the horizon. Madame Day hold classes every morning. Professor Night lectures each evening."

David praises, he sees what they point to. We are invited into that same journey and adventure of discovery and appreciation.

And not just in creation. David shares about the Law. Again the message Bible : "the revelation of God is whole and pulls our lives together. The sign posts of God are clear and point out the right road. The life maps of God are right, showing the way to joy. The directions of God are plain and easy on the eyes. God's reputation is 24-carat gold with a lifetime guarantee..."

I am not sure what you think of the OT Law. David declares such rich words.

Take David's words and put the word 'the bible' often in those places where it mentions the law...  
Now, can we say that about God's word...

Brother Andrew tells a story of his first journey into Bulgaria in the late 1950s. Andrew had brought many Bulgarian bibles illegally over the border. He was to meet with a man called Petroff in Sofia. When they met, he got to the point: "I have heard that both Bulgaria and Romania are desperately in need of Bibles. Is that so?"

"In answer. Petroff took me over to his desk. On it was an ancient typewriter with a sheet of paper in it, and next to the type writer a Bible, open to Exodus.

Three weeks ago I was extremely lucky, said Petroff, I managed to find this Bible. I got it for a good price. It was only a month's pension. ... The reason it was so cheap is that the books of Genesis, Exodus and Revelation had been cut out and

Why, I interrupted.

Who knows, perhaps to see, or perhaps to make cigarettes with the thin paper.

Anyway I was lucky enough to find it and have the money to purchase it. Now all I have to do is to fill in the missing parts from my own Bible and I have another complete book. I ought to be finished in another 4 weeks.

And what will you do with the second bible then?

Oh give it away. To a little church in Plotiv. Petroff's wife said where there is no Bible.

I wasn't sure that I understood. No Bible in the entire church? Certainly said Petroff. And there are many such churches in this country. Since Communism, it has been impossible to buy them.

Andrew went. Collected his car. Drove it to their apartment that night. He took out a carton and placed it on their table.

He continues

Petroff and his wife watched me put the box on their table, their eyes wide in frank and open curiosity. 'What's that?' asked Petroff.

I took out a Bible. I put it into the hands of Petroff and another into the hands of his wife.

‘And in the box -?’

‘More. And still more outside in the car.’”

Petroff closed his eyes. His mouth was working hard to control the emotion he was feeling. But two tears rolled slowly out from between his closed lids. And fell on the volume in his hands.”  
(God’s Smuggler, pg 176).

What moved Petroff. Such a love for the Word. “They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold, they are sweeter than honey.” There are many stories within the past and present work by Open Doors, where people receive a bible or have access to the bible and there is joy, tears.

Now. God invites us into the adventure to learn to value his Word like David had grown to.

The final part of the adventure in us : transformation.

David prays:

“Who can discern his errors – forgive my hidden faults. Keep me from willful sins. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight.”

He prays he will not be left as he is. For life to become increasingly all God desired for him – his character, his attitudes, his words, his actions, his silence, his noise. ‘This is who you are God, this is your word, let me be changed.’

David's prayer, invites us into the adventure of being changed by God. He loves us too much to leave us where we are. Paul reminds us of God's plan: He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion until the day of Christ Jesus, Phil 1. And we reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with every increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

What can this adventure look like in us?

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

Last Tuesday, so I was walking in the park – beautiful early evening, Sun shining.

I looked up at the sky, the slow sunset and I put those words on my lips.

They were words of praise, of acknowledgement of the Creator God.

So phrases, sentences of psalms, can give us the words to praise our God. Maybe at times we don't know what to say. How to say it. We have a treasury – the psalter – we can use.

Yet as I walked around I realized.

To put those words out there, it is a step of faith ultimately. So despite what I have heard or read or people said to me, as I walk round, to say those words, it is an act of *faith*.

The Psalms are part of God's word to us, but they are mostly words spoken to God. So how are they God's word **to** us, when they words said to God.

The words give an *invitation*. They ask a question.  
Can you say these words Grant?

So as I read Psalm 19 – the heavens declare the glory of God, the  
skies proclaim the work of his hands – can I say this God?  
This is already a way it can move from the Bible page to prayer.

Some days I am oriented. All is right with me. Yes Lord I can say it.

We read a psalm , we ask ourselves and we say –  
God. No not today I cannot say these words about you. Nope.

So we acknowledge to God our doubts – like Thomas in the upper  
room. To say. Actually Father I am struggling with this. I am in a  
place of disorientation – the faith as I hold and who I am do not  
line up.

Or it can be – words, I want to say but don't think I dare.

I listened to a seminar by Alain Emerson.  
Alain is from Northern Ireland.

As a Christian, he and his wife Lindsey served God. He had  
surrendered life to Christ, he had been sacrificial, he was involved  
in full time Christian work. Then after a mission trip, she was  
diagnosed with a brain tumour at age 22. There was a successful  
operation. But more tumors developed, significant prayer took  
place for her. Sadly she died. After 18 months of marriage. He was  
a widower at age 27.

In his grief, he realized he had grown up feelings things he should  
not say to God. He felt he had been faithful and yet all this  
happened. He said he could not find the language to pray. He felt  
he needed to say to God words that he didn't think he should.

Then he discovered the psalms of disorientation. They helped him – gave him words – he could express himself to God, in his deep grief, confusion and pain. The bible became his soul's articulation. He said 'I needed to pray my disappointments out.'

Eugene Peterson shares: Better to pray badly, than not to pray at all.'

A psalm 19 is positive.

But you read in Psalm 22 'My God my God why have you forsaken me?' –

or Psalm 13 'How Long God will you forget me''.

So the question can be, those words, am I am thinking them but I DON'T DARE say them. Yet they are deep down...

The psalms invite honesty, to pray your disappointments out.

In fact it can be a radical honesty. Like Psalm 139. Well loved. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Where can I go from your Spirit. V19 – If only you would slay the wicked O God! David says all this in one prayer. Now we come across these words, and that is how we honestly feel.

Now. Jesus did teach us to love our enemies. These words in the psalms we can read and bring them to God. Psalms give us permission to express the pain and anger in a situation. We open up to God – true honesty – and we are no longer hiding.

Where are you Grant. I am angry God. There you are. The other Grant, the one who said ;it is all fine. That wasn't you.

Honesty. We admit it hurts. We realize we don't have it all sorted we need his help to fill the heart.

Someone once said: what are you going to do with your pain. If it is not transformed, it will be transmitted." The Psalms never invalidate your pain but they will not leave you there. That is why so many psalms are re-orientation or bring new orientation, perhaps after expressing disorientation.

This psalm or any psalm takes on us a journey inside, as we read them and allow the Scripture, to shape our prayers.

Words to speak in prayer and praise.

Words that cause us to step out in faith. God this is who you are.

Words that invite us – God words to us – that we, honestly feel we cannot say today. Or perhaps words that are our soul's articulation, to express our pain disappointment to God, for we seek to be transformed, not to transmit to others.

Adventure, God wants to be revealed.

Adventure that God wants to do inside us.

Shall we pray.

Father, thank you how you reveal yourself. You have revealed yourself to me in the glory of your creation, in the power of your word, teachings and commandments and ultimately in the person of Jesus.

Thank you for the adventure you seek to involve us in.

For the transformation you seek to bring within each of us.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart become all your desire them to be. O Lord my rock and my redeemer. Amen.