

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm chapter 19. This is a fairly familiar psalm to most of us. While we're only going to be focusing our attention on the first six verses this morning, I do want to make sure that we see the singular focus of this psalm, which is God's revelation to man. Many theologians have termed the two ways in which God reveals Himself to man as the two books of revelation. There is the book of nature, which is seen in verses 1-6; and there is the book of Scripture, which is seen in verses 7-11. It's to this first book, the book of nature, general revelation, that we will focus our attention. So hear now the Word of the Lord from Psalm 19 beginning in verses 1.

Read Psalm 19:1-6

Pray

Today, in both the morning and the afternoon services, we're going to look at the two types of God's revelation to us. So what is general revelation? This is very likely not a term that you use in your everyday speech, but it is an important one theologically. What is general revelation? Very simply put, general revelation is that which man can know of God apart from Scripture because it is revealed in creation. I have had the pleasure to travel to many different places, many different climates, and to see many different things. I am from Alabama, so I'm very familiar with the woods. I've been to the heights of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and gazed out over the valley. I've stood in a foot of snow during Pennsylvania and Chicago winters. I've seen the amber waves of grain of the Kansas. I've walked the white sand beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. I've even lived in the harsh desert of Iraq. One thing that stands out about all of those varying environments is how much I came to appreciate the Lord for who He is as creator and sustainer of all things. And that got me thinking, we rarely hear sermons preached on the beauty and importance of God revealing Himself in creation. We hear sermons all the time about the written Word of God, about the primacy of the Word, about the inerrancy and sufficiency of the

Word. Don't get me wrong, preaching on the nature of the written Word is vitally important, especially in our day and age when so much is being questioned in regards to the inerrancy and authority of the Scripture. But we must be sure not to highlight the important doctrine of special revelation to the neglect of the doctrine of general revelation. That which is revealed to all through creation is just as inerrant and authoritative as the written Word because it has the same source. Our covenant God makes Himself known through the book of nature. This is general revelation. And here in our text this morning we see general revelation spoken of in two ways: first, the proclamation of creation, and next, the presentation of creation.

Let us turn our attention first to the proclamation of creation. Read with me once again the first four verses, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." Here, the psalmist focuses on three aspects of God that is proclaimed in creation. Creation proclaims the wonder of God. Look back at the beginning of verse 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God." Even though David only mentions the heavens, it's clear from the text that he means this as referring to all of creation. Creation itself shows forth the attributes of God. God is infinite, eternal, immutable, self-sufficient, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, good, loving, wise, faithful, merciful, gracious, holy, just, and glorious. This is what creation is proclaiming, who God is. Every sun ray that shines upon the earth tells us something about God. Every tree on this planet shows forth the person of God. Every animal that roams our land displays the splendor of our God.

So think of these things with me for a moment. What of the wonder and glory of God do the birds display? His goodness, love, and graciousness, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" What do

the crashing waves of the sea tell us of God? His omnipotence as the one who separated the sea from the dry land and the one who has power over even the wind and the waves so that they obey. What of the galaxies far off and the seemingly endless expanse of the cosmos? His omnipresence and infinitude, for He is sustaining all things both here where we are and at the remotest parts of the universe, which seems to have no beginning or end but that is simply to reflect back upon the Lord who truly has no beginning or end, because He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end Himself. Do you see the wonder of God proclaimed in all creation?

But it's not just the wonder of God, it is the work of God proclaimed as well. Look at the latter half of verse 1, "And the firmament sheweth His handywork." The very work of God's hands is proclaimed through the fruit of that work. You may be sitting there thinking, 'Yeah, that makes sense. Of course creation proclaims God's handiwork, because it is itself a work of God's hand.' And you'd be right. But creation proclaims so much more of God's handiwork than simply that He is creator. What does the snow falling in its perfect white blankets proclaim concerning God's handiwork? That pure white snow proclaims the forgiveness of sins and the cleansing power of God to remove the stain of sin and make you white as snow. Psalm 51:7, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." What of the leaves of the plants? Do they not declare the work of God in covering our nakedness and hiding our shame as He did with our first parents, Adam and Eve? Everything around you in this world proclaims the Lord's handiwork, what He has done in acts of creation and providence, and how He has worked to bring about salvation for His people. Do you see the work of God proclaimed in all creation?

Creation proclaims the wonder of God, the work of God, and now the word of God. The creation speaks, but not in an audible way. The testimony of God comes by the way of the glory of the world. Verse 2, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night

sheweth knowledge.” The continual aspect of the language of this verse speaks to the never-ending proclamation of the word of God in creation. The Hebrew phrase here translated “uttereth” has in it the thought of pouring out, or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing forever with the Lord’s praise. This proclamation of the word of God continues in verses 3 and 4, “There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” On this Calvin writes, “Different nations differ from each other as to language; but the heavens have a common language to teach all men without distinction, nor is there any thing but their own carelessness to hinder even those who are most strange to each other, and who live in the most distant parts of the world, from profiting, as it were, at the mouth of the same teacher.” There is not one square inch in all of the created universe where this word of God proclaimed through creation is not heard.

But this proclamation of creation is not enough. It is insufficient in itself. It does not reveal the totality of what man is to know of God and salvation. It is sufficient only to condemn. Romans 1 says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” Creation has so made God known to all men that he is without excuse. There is no such thing as an atheist. Spurgeon puts it beautifully, “He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an athiest, brands himself at the same

moment as an idiot or a liar.” Only a fool would say there is no God, because the evidence is right there plain to see.

Man in his natural state only knows enough about God as revealed in creation to damn him to hell. This is why we cannot neglect special revelation. This is why the primacy is placed on the written Word, because that is where the way of salvation is made known. Creation can't tell you magnitude of your sins, but the Word can. Creation can't tell you your need for a Savior, but the Word can. Creation can't tell you to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, but the Word can. If you are here today and you are not trusting in Christ, heed the testimony of all creation and hear the call of the Lord from His Word: repent and believe the Gospel. For if you don't, on that last day, that great day of judgement, the Lord will call upon even creation itself as a witness against you, for denying their testimony. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. That is the proclamation, not just of creation, but of God Himself.

At the end of verse four David makes a shift from speaking of the proclamation of creation to now speaking of the presentation of creation. Here we get a glimpse of the beauty of creation through the use of poetic language. The end of verse 4 reads, “In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun.” This section focuses on the sun, which points to the universality of general revelation, and we will get to this universality at the end of our passage. But the psalmist speaks of the sun, symbolizing all of general revelation, in these two similes of a bridegroom and a runner. So let's look first to the bridegroom. David says, “In them [the heavens] hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.” Here we see a bit of the beauty of general revelation, of this book of nature. There is a longing anticipation envisioned here, where the groom is coming out of his chamber to be with his bride, knowing the consummation of that union is near. So it is with general revelation going forth as the rays of the sun, longing to be joined with those

who rightly receive it, and bearing fruit. This image is also a picture of Christ and the Church. The light of the sun goes out in the morning with its activity and communicates life and happiness to all things around it, like a bridegroom, dressed in his wedding attire, going from his chamber to his bride; in like manner, at His incarnation, Christ Jesus, the promised bridegroom, visited His Church, being clothed himself, and clothing her with that robe of righteousness which Holy Scripture refers to as the marriage garment. How beautiful a picture this is.

The other comparison is to that of a runner, “And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.” This general revelation of God goes forth, and it does not return void. It always serves its purpose. It always does its job. The strong man is conscious and confident of his own strength, and promises to himself victory and the glory which attends it, and so he sets upon his work with great pleasure. When a runner goes out and runs his race just as he has trained, just as he is supposed to, he rejoices in it. And the runner in a race has a sense of urgency, a sense of responsibility. So it is with the sun as we see in Ecclesiastes 1:5. This is how it is with general revelation, which goes forth continually, day after day, because it has a purpose. And it gladly goes out day after day because that is the purpose for which God created it.

And this purpose is accomplished in a universal way. Continuing the illustration of the sun, the psalmist goes on to say, “His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” There is nothing on earth which does not feel the effects of the sun in some sense, either by light, heat, or radiation. The sun breaks through into everything. And remember, the sun is simply an illustration for general revelation. If this is true of creation itself, it must be true of that revelation which creation proclaims. There’s nothing which the revelation of God does not penetrate. That revelation of God goes forth into the very heart and very core of every human being on this planet. And just as the sun penetrating into all the earth has varying

effects based on what it reaches, so too does general revelation. The same sun that melts the snow after a winter storm hardens the clay after a spring rain. The same sun that causes the crops to grow providing food for the earth causes the fields to rage and burn from its heat. There is no escaping the heat of the sun, and so there is no escaping the “heat” of revelation. There will come a day when all men will be held accountable for their lives. We already saw earlier in Romans 1 that the attributes of God are plainly manifest so as to leave no man excused.

The general revelation that goes forth throughout all the earth will serve to either melt the heart of stone, softening man to the Gospel, or hardening the heart so as to have man rebel more and more against the truth he already knows. The general revelation of God will either cause the seed of faith to grow, bearing the fruit of the Gospel in man’s life, or it will ravage man as a wildfire, causing death and destruction to those who are not outside of its wrath. Immediately after Paul’s explanation of general revelation rendering man without excuse, he writes of the end result in Romans 2. But unless they are warned, they cannot know what’s coming. This is your duty, believer. You have a responsibility to go out and warn those in this world who are blinded by their sin and can’t see the wrath to come. You have a duty to proclaim salvation to those who are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. What are you doing to fulfill that responsibility? Here in the Chicagoland area there are nearly 9.5 million people; what are you doing to reach them with the Gospel? The day is coming when they will no longer be warned. The day is coming when your voice will no longer be heard by this world. The day is coming when the unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire and feel the immense heat of the revelation that they rejected. But that day is not now. There is still hope for those who are not of us. Until that day comes, you have the responsibility to proclaim the Gospel, to warn people of the wrath to come, and call them unto repentance. Do not neglect such great a responsibility.

I know that a doctrine like general revelation can sometimes be simply a topic of theological discussion, something for us to pontificate over. But there must be some practicality to it. Doctrine must lead to doxology. Orthodoxy must lead to orthopraxy. Or to put it in simple terms, what is true must impact what you do. So I want us to leave here with five practical truths of this great doctrine. First, creation is a source of comfort to us. This is because the God who made all things, who created the sun and moon and stars, the God who planted every plant and causes the wind and rains to come is sovereign over all things. The sovereignty of God is a source of comfort. We have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about. Nothing happens outside of God's sovereign hand. And this general revelation tells us this; we just have to have ears to hear what it has to say. Be comforted by the God who is sovereign over all things. And not only that, but creation should cause us to wonder at God. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Oh, the wonder of our covenant God. Think about creation. Our sun is 93 million miles away. The farthest star in the Milky Way galaxy from us is over 75,000 lightyears away. That just in our own galaxy. It's estimated that there are over 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe. And guess what; God is greater than that, because He is the one who made the observable universe. This God is our God, and He is our creator. It's not just the expanse of the universe that causes us to wonder, but every single aspect of creation. Creation ought to strike in us a sense of wonder for who God is and His mighty acts.

Next, general revelation affects how we do apologetics. Apologetics is the defense of the faith. It is answering questions concerning Christian doctrine. And if this doctrine of general revelation is true, then we have the conscience of men on our side, because every man innately knows there is a God. There is something within man that can be brought to the surface and used against his own attempts at dismantling the faith. Most people know right and wrong; they have a natural moral compass. They already know the 10 commandments, even if they cannot tell you what they

are. That's because nature has revealed it to them; the law of God is written on their hearts. This is something that can be utilized in defending the faith. Appeal to the conscience. Make the person say they don't know what it is that they are talking about; that even they don't believe their blasphemies to be true. Then give them the Gospel. And this brings us to our next point of application: general revelation affects how we do evangelism and missions. If we don't tell people about Jesus, they won't know the way of salvation. We've already seen that general revelation reveals enough of the attributes and characteristics of God that man is left without excuse. You may be in a situation where you will have to say something, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone, and if they don't hear it then they will never know. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. We all should be sharing the Gospel with those around us. This doctrine of general revelation ought to affect how we do it, whether locally or globally, knowing that without the proclamation of the Gospel man is utterly without hope.

And finally, we should be thankful we are not left with just general revelation. We need something more. General revelation is insufficient for faith and life. We can't just end at verse 6 in Psalm 19 and neglect what follows. General revelation must be accompanied by special revelation. And thank God that He has given us that special revelation. Do you love the Word of the Lord? Do you meditate on His law day and night? Do you realize that without it you would be just like everyone else, lost and condemned by the insufficiency of the knowledge of general revelation? Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. And be thankful that you are not left with just general revelation, but you know the way of salvation in Christ Jesus.

So brothers and sisters, as you look upon the trees and the birds, the moon and the stars, as the rain falls and the wind howls, as the heat of the sun reaches your skin, remember that this creation is a means by which God is revealing Himself to you. Never lose sight of His wonder, works, and word proclaimed in His creation.

Never cease to be amazed as the beauty and strength of how creation is presented to you. And always remember that this truth of general revelation has a direct impact in how you will live your life as you walk out these doors. Let us be driven by all of God's revelation.