PSALM 19: “YOUR WORD IS TRUTH”

When Jesus was praying for His disciples in what has come to be known as The High Priestly Prayer (John 17), He said this to His heavenly Father: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” Those four words – Your word is truth – summarize what I believe is the central message of Psalm 19. God’s word IS truth because it reveals the very character of God. The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to us. Unfortunately we live in a world filled with people who don’t know the truth, the truth revealed in God’s word, the truth that sets people free, the truth of the gospel, the truth revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Many people have the philosophy espoused by Gustave Flaubert (French novelist of the 19th C) who wrote: “There is no truth. There is only perception.” In other words, truth is relative. It’s not absolute. It’s only what you say it is – my opinion versus your opinion. But clearly that is NOT what the Bible teaches! God’s word IS truth. So with that introduction, let’s delve into God’s word, Psalm 19.

READ Psalm 19:1-6

“The heavens declare the glory of God.” The stars, moon, sun, planets, galaxies all offer testimony to the greatness of their Creator. The first 6 verses of this psalm describe what theologians call, “general revelation.” God’s revelation of Himself and His attributes thru the natural, physical world that He created. OK, what can we learn about God from nature? What is it about God that the heavens are communicating? If you were an aborigine living in the bush lands of Western Australia or on a remote island in the South Pacific, what could you know about God from “general revelation”?

[There is a God. He made the world. There is an order and an intelligence behind His creation. There is beauty in creation. There is majesty. It is good. There are tiny intricate details. There is a balance in nature.]

Listen to the Apostle Paul’s statement concerning general revelation in Romans 1: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things [idolatry]. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” (1:18-25)

Paul says basically that mankind everywhere is aware of God’s existence, His power, His glory and His wisdom based on what has been shown to us thru general revelation, thru nature. But mankind failed to honor and glorify his Creator. Man elevated himself and the creation he observed above God. Man chose to worship the creation (which could include himself) rather than the divine Creator. Man wildly speculated about God which produced misconceptions about God. And a wrong idea about God can lead to all kinds of immorality.

So, even if you never heard the gospel or read the Bible or darkened the doors of a church you could know some things about God. But, there are some obvious limitations to what we can know about God thru nature alone. For example, nature does not reveal God’s triune personhood (Father, Son, Holy Spirit); the Lord Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross for us; the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, salvation, heaven, hope, eternal life, the loyal love of God, God’s actions for His people Israel and grace, His mandate for the church, the millennial kingdom, etc. Where do we learn about all of these things? Through His holy word. This is what theologians term, “specific revelation.” God has revealed Himself thru His spoken word, dreams, visions and this revelation was then written down, compiled and passed on to us centuries later in the canon of holy scripture, the Bible. Which takes us to verses 7-10 and the heart of Psalm 19…

READ Psalm 19:7-10

Just a tremendous and rich passage of scripture! We could camp out here in these verses for a while, but we only have a short time. *[comment on handout – parallels between Ps 19 and Ps 119]* The psalmist lays out 6 lines of thought about the word of God in these verses. Notice the 6 synonyms for God’s word: **“law”** (teaching, instruction), **“testimony”** (witness), **“precepts”** (principles, guidelines), **“commandment”** (authority, not suggestions or guidelines, obedience is expected), **“fear”** (awe, reverence, what the word of God produces in us), **“rules”** (judgments). All six are “of the Lord” they are of Yahweh. These are the words from God Himself.

Notice the six attributes of God’s word: **“perfect”** (sufficient, complete – we don’t need the Book of Mormon, the Koran, the Eightfold Path or an edict from the Pope, Rev 22:18 warns us about adding to His word), **“sure”** (reliable, trustworthy), **“right”** (proper way, God’s way is best), **“pure”** (clear direction, Ps 12:6 – the words of the Lord are pure words), **“clean”** (holy, without evil), **“true”** (God’s word is the complete source of truth, no errors).

Notice the six things that scripture does, God’s word acts, it does something in our lives: It **revives the soul** (refreshes, restores, transforms, Rom 1:16 – the power of God for salvation). It **makes wise the simple** (wisdom for life, applying God’s word and making right choices). It **rejoices the heart** (produces joy, comfort, hope). It **enlightens the eyes** (God’s perspective, Prov 6:23 – “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life”). It **endures forever** (never changes, needs no update). It **is altogether righteous** (totally right).

For these reasons, v 10, there is nothing more desirable or sweeter in the world than the Word of God. The Bible proclaims a revelation of God’s glory that surpasses that of the heavens. So how should we respond?

READ Psalm 19:11-14

Since the Word of God is truth, if you read it and apply it to your life you will become keenly aware of and concerned about sin in your life. There are two kinds of sin – hidden sins (what the psalmist refers to in v 12 as “hidden faults”) and presumptuous sins. The Law of Moses distinguished sins this way and had certain rules for dealing with a particular kind of sin. A hidden sin is a sin that we commit unintentionally. A presumptuous sin is a sin that we commit knowingly (eyes wide open). The psalmist, convicted of his own sin, approaches the Lord humbly in order to deal with it rather than deny it. Forgiveness can only come by, first, being completely honest with God and then relying upon His grace. The psalmist prays that the Lord keep him from sinning. He really desires to do the right thing. He knows that keeping God’s word brings with it great reward. But he also knows his own heart and his bent toward sin – “Lord, let them not have dominion over me!” It is better to be completely innocent and blameless than to be forgiven. Certainly David knew something about that from his own experience. He understood that even if God forgives a person of their sin, there are still consequences that they must be dealt with. So if he is going to have a deep and personal relationship with God he needs to avoid sin altogether and God’s word helps him to do that – Psalm 119:11 KJV “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” The ESV says “I have stored up Your word in my heart…”

He closes with those great words, which I often repeat in my own private prayers: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock (strength) and my redeemer.” In other words, “May all I say and think about please you, honor you, glorify you, O Lord.”

The psalmist refers to God as “my rock and my redeemer…” Psalm 18:2: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Job 19:25: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ lives and He is coming back here again someday! That truth is also revealed in God’s word.

The hymn I’ve chosen to close with today is “Trust and Obey.” Because God’s word is true, because it is right, because it is reliable, because it is holy, because it is sufficient in all matters of our life – we can trust Him fully and do what He tells us to do.