

Sunday January 2, 2022
 Lesson 5: In Awe of God's Creation
 Scripture: Psalm 19: 1-6

Context:

The winter Adult Bible Studies Curriculum continues its focus on engaging the world with a new unit entitled "Wonder." This set of lessons in the season of Epiphany will focus on how we are called to a sense of wonder in our faith. As we look to the glory of God, we are transformed and can engage in the world in new ways as disciples of Jesus. Today we will focus on how God is the creator and sustainer of everything.

The text for the day comes from the book of Psalms, a collection of psalms and poems dated to the times surrounding the rise and fall of kingship in ancient Israel. Psalm 19 is often known more for the ending where the psalmist declares God as their "rock and redeemer." Yet today's lesson focuses on the opening verses of the psalm.

The opening of the book tells of the heavens and proclaims how this handiwork belongs to God. The psalmist goes on to describe how the handiwork becomes manifest. The verses state quite simply: the world witnesses to God.¹ The psalmist includes all the places where one sees "creation" speaking out to praise God.

The heavens show the beauty of God's creation. Day and night do not use words or speech, yet they show the power of God in playing with light and dark. As humanity looks to these places, the imagination is in the midst of an unending concert sung by the universe to the glory of God.² One can look to all sorts of examples to see such a display of singing.

One such example the psalmist employs is the placement of the sun. Like a bridegroom emerging from the wedding canopy and a runner going on their long run, the sun rises to lead in the day and goes across the sky. The warmth of the sun reaches everything, stirring, calling, and supporting life.³ It is just one example at the awe and wonder God inspires in the world.

The psalm is not meant to say creation is necessarily divine. Instead, the psalmist is marveling at the creator who has made all these things to happen. This is the same creator who in the later part of the psalm will be praised for giving humanity the Torah and the gift of life to humanity. The Hebrew title of God in this passage, *El*, is the designation of God as father creator of all.⁴ Humanity can praise God as the one who by making creation is the giver of all life.

¹ Mays, James L. "Psalms." *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 97.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 98.

Application

Psalm 19 is one of the psalms I have come to love and cherish over the years. I will never forget walking out of a Bible study on this psalm only to have someone the next day ask me if I had looked at the beautiful night sky the evening before to see God's handiwork sing of God's wonders. This passage comes to life if all you do is look out your window and marvel at what you may see in the sky any time of night or day.

The psalm reminds us of the power of wonder and mystery to come in life especially as we look at creation. We may get concerned with the details of why the sky appears blue and how stars are formed. Those are indeed fun things to explore and research and science often gives us an avenue to probe those questions and seek answers.

Yet I hope from time to time, we simply marvel at them and give thanks to God for creating such handiwork. As we marvel at those things, we remember how God is the creator and maker of the universe. God is the source of all life, and we are called to adore and marvel at our creator and sustainer who gives us life.

I once had a conversation with someone about this very fact when it comes to preaching. Often when we hear the Word proclaimed, we are hoping to find answers. Perhaps we believe the sermon should call us to repent, to learn more about the Bible, or to give us tips for practical and daily living. Those are indeed wonderful and great things and hopefully all sermons focus on the good news found in Jesus Christ and give hope to the gathered congregation.

Yet every now and then, hopefully the preacher will receive the nudge from the Holy Spirit to preach on the wonder and mystery of God. The sermon should marvel at God the creator who has made all things and who continues to sustain creation. For all of us, there is the practice of proclaiming the glory of God and the majestic nature of the one who is to be adored.

Often when we adore something or someone, we name their attributes and at times it allows us to process at the power of adoration. Adoration exalts and rejoices over sheer existence. It doesn't necessarily give anything to us or benefit us directly. Yet as we participate in practicing adoration, we begin to see the true beauty and fragility found in life.

God's glory is one of those gifts to us to be cultivated. As we adore God, we grow in our ability to see the grandeur in creation and how we too are a part of God's creation. We begin to see how life is connected and we are all caught in web where we are connected to one another and to all things God has created.

Psalm 19 helps us to move a place of adoration for God and what God is doing in creation in our lives. The wonderful thing about adoration is there are many ways of doing it. Sometimes it is simply watching the sunrise or sunset and marveling at it. Other times, it's being with a child and seeing their excitement with looking through their telescope as they smile and talk about seeing all the bright stars. And sometimes it is allowing ourselves to stop participating in the rat race of life and getting through our to-do list to step outside and take a walk without earbuds or phones. As we walk, or run, we might notice things we've never seen before and we can adore all the works of God whether it is the changing leaves or the sunset which takes our breath away. We can adore God, the creator and sustainer of life.

How do you engage in the adoration of God? What are your favorite ways to appreciate God's handiwork? When do you take time to adore God and revel in the

majesty of our Lord? Why do you think wonder it so important to the Christian faith? What are some specific practices this week you can engage in to marvel at God's handiwork and practice adoration?

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