



# The Lord Reveals Himself to Us – An Exegetical Study of Psalm 19

Presented to the California/Nevada Pastors' Conference  
Meeting at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Belmont CA

26 January 2016

Tuesday of the Third Sunday after the Epiphany  
Day of St. Titus, Pastor and Confessor

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## Psalm 19

New International Version 1984

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup>Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

<sup>4</sup>Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup> which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup>It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.

<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup>The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

<sup>10</sup>They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

<sup>11</sup>By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup>Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup>Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.

Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup>May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

New International Version 2011

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

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

<sup>2</sup>Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup>Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

<sup>5</sup>It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup>It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.  
<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.  
<sup>9</sup>The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.  
The decrees of the LORD are firm and all of them are righteous.  
<sup>10</sup>They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup>By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.  
<sup>12</sup>But who can discern their errors? Forgive my hidden faults.  
<sup>13</sup>Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.  
Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.  
<sup>14</sup>May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your  
sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

### English Standard Version

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup> Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.  
In them he has set a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup> which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his  
chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.  
<sup>6</sup> Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is  
nothing hidden from its heat.  
<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;  
<sup>8</sup> the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
<sup>9</sup> the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;  
the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.  
<sup>10</sup> More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.  
<sup>12</sup> Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.  
<sup>13</sup> Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over  
me!  
Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.  
<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,

O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Holman Christian Standard Bible

For the choir director. A Davidic psalm.

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands.  
<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.  
In the heavens He has pitched a tent for the sun.  
<sup>5</sup> It is like a groom coming from the bridal chamber; it rejoices like an athlete running a course.  
<sup>6</sup> It rises from one end of the heavens and circles to their other end;  
nothing is hidden from its heat.  
<sup>7</sup> The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life;  
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise.  
<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad;  
the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up.  
<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous.  
<sup>10</sup> They are more desirable than gold—than an abundance of pure gold;  
and sweeter than honey, which comes from the honeycomb.  
<sup>11</sup> In addition, Your servant is warned by them; there is great reward in keeping them.  
<sup>12</sup> Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults.  
<sup>13</sup> Moreover, keep Your servant from willful sins; do not let them rule over me.  
Then I will be innocent and cleansed from blatant rebellion.  
<sup>14</sup> May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You,  
LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

New King James Version

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.  
<sup>2</sup> Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.  
<sup>3</sup> *There is* no speech nor language *Where* their voice is not heard.  
<sup>4</sup> Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.  
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, <sup>5</sup> Which *is* like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *And* rejoices like a strong man to run its race.  
<sup>6</sup> Its rising *is* from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing

hidden from its heat.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;

<sup>8</sup> The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

<sup>10</sup> More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.

<sup>12</sup> Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

<sup>13</sup> Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

## Introduction

This past Sunday, many of you read the Gospel of the Day, Luke 4:14-21, to the congregations you serve. In that account, Jesus returned to his boyhood home of Nazareth. He was a traveling rabbi, and as such it was his responsibility to serve as the guest preacher in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He opened the scroll of Isaiah and read from what we call chapter 61, a prophecy of the blessings that the Messiah would bring to his people. Then he rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down to preach. His message began, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah, the fulfillment of that prophecy. He had come to deliver blessings to the Nazarenes in the synagogue that very day.

That would have been a bad day for a member of the synagogue to miss church. Of course, we teach our people that there is never a good day to miss church. It would have been an especially bad day, though, to be absent when the Lord himself came to reveal himself to the people in the synagogue.

Neither you nor I nor any of the members of our congregations were in church that Sabbath Day. That was a long distance away from where we live. That was long before any of us were born. It would be nice if Jesus would come to guest preach in our congregations today, but he doesn't do that anymore. Our congregations are stuck with us. How, then, does Jesus reveal himself to us and to the people we serve? The answer is found in the Psalm of the Day from Sunday. Psalm 19 tells us about how the Lord reveals himself to us.

When Martin Luther read Psalm 19, he understood it to describe how God reveals himself in his Word from start to finish. Almost all interpreters today understand the first section of Psalm 19 to be describing God's revelation in creation. This study treats Psalm 19 in three main sections: verses 2-7 address God's revelation in creation, verses 8-12 address his revelation in his Word, and verses 13-15 address the Lord's work in our hearts and lives. A simple outline of Psalm 19 (according to the verse numbering in the Hebrew text) that follows this understanding looks like this:

Psalm 19 – "The Lord Reveals Himself to Us"

1. In Creation (verses 2-7)
2. In His Word (verses 8-12)
3. In Justification and Sanctification (verses 13-15)

### Verse 1

לְמַנְצֵחַ מְזֻמָּר לְדָוִד:

For the director. A psalm of David.

לְמַנְצֵחַ is a Piel participle from נָצַח. This form is only used in the Psalm headings and in Chronicles, where it designates some kind of supervisor. This psalm was intended to be used under the supervision of one in charge. It has been so used for thousands of years in public worship. One who oversees the use of a musical piece today is called a director.

Psalm 19 is one of 57 “psalms” designated as a מְזֻמָּר in its heading. This is the word that, translated into Greek, became the title for the whole book.

David is clearly identified as the author. In the surrounding psalms David praises the Lord for delivering him from his enemies. In this psalm he leads the congregation in praising God for the glory that he reveals in creation, his Word, and the believer’s life.

### Verse 2

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹד־אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו מְגִיד הַרְקִיעַ:

The heavens are making known the glory of God, and the sky is announcing the work of his hands.

“Heavens” is a flexible word both in Hebrew and in English. Here הַשָּׁמַיִם is not used to designate the dwelling place of God, but rather, part of God’s creation, the region above the earth. This word takes the reader back to Genesis 1:1, where the NIV translates it “heavens,” and 1:8, where the NIV translates it “sky.” Parallel to הַשָּׁמַיִם is הַרְקִיעַ. (It is the final word in the verse, as it forms a chiasm.) This word also takes us back to the second day of creation in Genesis 1:6-8, when God created what the NIV translates “expanse” (1984) or “vault” (2011) and what the KJV translates “firmament.”

Not only are “the heavens” and “the sky” parallel, but so are their verbs. מְסַפְּרִים and מְגִיד are both participles. Their work of “making known” and “announcing” are ongoing.

It is the “glory of God” that the heavens are making known. We are very familiar with the phrase כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה from the Old Testament. This, on the other hand, is the כְּבוֹד־אֱלֹהִים. אֱלֹהִים is the generic Semitic term for “God,” which is an appropriate way to describe the God revealed by natural knowledge. (God will be called יְהוָה in the second part of the psalm.) A person doesn’t have to trust in the true God to see and appreciate the glory that the heavens make known. Many have seen this glory and attributed it to false gods. The אֱלֹהִים that the heavens make known is the God of the Bible, but the glory that they show is his power, rather than his covenant mercy.

Luther interpreted “the glory of God” to be the gospel, and said that the heavens making it known means that it is preached in all places under heaven. He interpreted

“the work of his hands” to be everything that God does through the gospel. If David had been speaking about God’s Word here, however, it seems more likely that he would have called him by his proper covenant name, as in the second section of the psalm which clearly does speak of the Lord’s Word. לַאֲלֹהִים versus יְהוָה is an intentional distinction within the psalm.

### Verse 3

יּוֹם לְיוֹם יִבְיַע אָמַר וּלְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה יַחְוֶה־דַּעַת:

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

Brug explains that יּוֹם לְיוֹם (literally “day to day”) may be translated as a personification (“one day pours forth speech to another”) or adverbially (“day after day they pour forth speech”). The case is the same for וּלְלַיְלָה לְלַיְלָה (“and night to night”). Just as the participles from verse 1 show the constancy of creation’s testimony, so does the vocable meaning of the Hifil imperfect יִבְיַע. Brown-Driver-Briggs offers “belch forth” as a possible meaning in this context. You wouldn’t publish it in a translation, but it communicates well the idea that the testimony spews forth uncontrollably.

It is hard to say definitively whether the heavens and the sky from verse 1 are doing the declaring every day and night, or if the day and night themselves are declaring. (An argument that “the heavens” and “the sky” remain the subjects is that they seem to carry through all the way to verse 5b as the antecedent of בְּהֵם.) Either way, the testimony is uninterrupted. The fourth expression of declaration is the Piel imperfect יַחְוֶה with דַּעַת: “it will declare knowledge.”

### Verse 4

אֵין־אָמַר וְאֵין דְּבָרִים בְּלֵי נִשְׁמַע קוֹלָם:

There is not speech and there are not words, their voice is not heard.

Verse 4 either means that their voice is heard everywhere or nowhere. Even though these options are opposite of each other, either one is grammatically possible and makes sense in context. Either way, the point is the same: even though their voice is not expressed in audible words, it is understood everywhere.

Leupold adds the relative “where” to his translation after דְּבָרִים. (He translates, “There is no speech, nor are there words, Where their voice is not heard.”) He argues that Hebrew often omits the relative where it obviously makes sense in English. He says that the only other way to make this verse and the next verse make sense together is to add “yet” to the beginning of verse 5. NIV1984 follows his logic and includes the relative (a



translation which carries the understanding that their voice is heard everywhere). NIV2011 does not have “where,” but adds “yet” to the beginning of verse 5 (a translation which carries the understanding that their voice is heard nowhere).

St. Paul borrows the words of verse 4 in Romans 10:18. He uses David’s words that describe the universal testimony of creation to describe the worldwide testimony of the gospel.

Luther understands this verse to be saying that the gospel will be preached in all lands and in all languages. That this verse is quoted in Romans to speak about the testimony of the gospel is a strong argument for Luther’s interpretation. It does happen, though, that New Testament writers quote the Old Testament, using passages in ways that are unexpected to us as they suit the Holy Spirit’s inspired purposes.

#### Verse 5a

בְּכֹל-הָאָרֶץ וְיָצָא קוֹם וּבִקְצֵה תִבֵּל מִלִּיהִם

Their line goes out in all the earth, and their words in the edge of the world.

The beginning of verse 5 is a reiteration of the previous verse. What is the קוֹם that goes out in all the earth, though? The Septuagint translates “voice.” This Hebrew word is used elsewhere to describe a string that is used for measuring. Leupold says the thought here is “territory measured,” and that the idiom means “their influence.” The heavens influence all the earth. The sky’s “words” reach every corner of the world.

#### Verses 2-5a

One way the Lord reveals himself to us is through the heavens or the skies that he created. All people see the sky. It is filled with amazing sights that testify to the one who made the universe. Not far above the earth, we enjoy rainbows. They are a sign of God’s promise and show us beauty. Clouds travel across the sky bringing needed water to the land. Higher up, the moon orbits the earth. It does so much more than bringing light to the night. It also drives our oceans’ tides, which keeps them from becoming stagnant and disgusting and regulates the earth’s weather systems. The moon’s gravity keeps the earth on its ideal 23.5-degree axis. (Without the moon, the earth could wobble to a tilt of up to 60 degrees.) Without a moon the size of our own, the earth would be a far less habitable place. The moon also allows us to experience solar eclipses, which have made possible some important scientific discoveries. Even though the sun is 400 times larger than the moon, it is also 400 times further away, so that the moon perfectly matches up and blocks out the sun when they align. The other planets in our solar system are not only fun to look at, but also make earth a safer place to be. Most notably, Jupiter’s gravity sucks up

many of the objects that invade our solar system and keeps them from impacting earth. All the planets in our solar system are ideally spaced so as not to perturb each other's orbits. Much further away, the stars that we see in our night sky make fascinating pictures and for millennia aided navigation. Yet we are not close enough to any of the stars that will cause problems for us either with their gravity or by exploding. Our position in the galaxy is the safest place possible. And our galaxy is the safest kind in which to live. Though we cannot see them with the naked eye, we are blessed to live at a time when we have the technology to see galaxies far beyond our own. Yet our galaxy is located in a sparsely populated portion of the universe, which keeps it from being negatively affected by others.

These objects in the sky don't have voices to speak words. Rather, simply by doing what they do, they make it obvious that God has designed all of these to carry out their important purposes for us. Their message is clear to all people, no matter where on earth they live or what language they speak. The testimony of the heavens never stops. God's glory is constantly on display, day and night. The beautiful, orderly universe which God created and maintains gives testimony to its Maker.

Those who ignore this testimony and do not believe in the Creator are without excuse (Romans 1:20). The beautiful, orderly universe which the Lord created and maintains gives silent testimony to the power and wisdom of its Creator. Yet many people misuse the heavens. Some study them to find evidence of the Big Bang. Some study them to tell the future. Some worship them. The heavens do not testify to evolution or the future or themselves. The skies make it clear that they were carefully designed and are still controlled by the Almighty One.

#### Verse 5b

לְשֶׁמֶשׁ שָׁם־אֵהָל בָּהֶם:

For the sun he has put a tent in them,

The sky is the tent (אֵהָל) for the sun (לְשֶׁמֶשׁ). This must have seemed a strange picture to the translators of the Septuagint, which says "habitation" instead of "tent." Brug explains, however, that from our perspective the sky looks like a blue canopy that arches over the sun. בָּהֶם ("in them") refers back to the heavens and the sky in verse 1.

#### Verse 6

וְהוּא בְּחֵתֵן יֵצֵא מִחֻפְתּוֹ יְשִׁישׁ כְּגִבּוֹר לְרוּחַ אֲרָח:

and it is like a bridegroom going out from his wedding chamber. Like a heroic one he will rejoice to run a course,

The Holy Spirit and David use some creative illustrations for the sun. First, it is like a bridegroom (בְּחֵתָן) going out מִחֻפָּתוֹ. Brug explains that modern Hebrew uses this word to describe the canopy over bride and groom at their wedding, but that here it seems to refer to the tent or canopied bed where the couple has spent their wedding night. Leupold says, “the point of comparison [is] the fresh, lusty strength of the young man, happy in his youthful love.” The sun beams like a groom after his wedding night. Additionally, we may think about how a wedding was a huge party among the Israelites, and understand that David is saying the sunrise is a reason for rejoicing every morning.

The second illustration for the sun is a mighty man (כְּגִבּוֹר) running a race. He is an excellent athlete, so he runs with confidence. He knows his course. He finishes strong every time. Just as we might celebrate our favorite athlete's accomplishments, so also we enjoy the life-giving blessings that God brings us through the sun. Brug explains that both comparisons emphasize the happiness and celebration that attend the sun's life-sustaining reappearance each day.

#### Verse 7

מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם | מוֹצְאוֹ וְתִקְוַתּוֹ | עַל־קִצּוֹתָם וְאֵין נִסְתָּר מִחֻמָּתוֹ:

from the edge of the heavens, its place of departure, and its turning point over their edges, and there is nothing hidden from its glow.

David describes the sun's course from his perspective on earth. It departs from the eastern edge of the heavens and makes its way to the western edge. As it disappears in the west, it leaves behind beautiful sunsets for us to enjoy. Then it goes back to the place it began to start its course again the following morning. The sun shines on everything on the face of the earth. It is impossible to avoid it – nor should we want to. If the sun glows with that level of glory, just think of the glory of the one who put it there!

In these verses, Luther identified “the sun” with Jesus, saying that he cannot be hindered just as nobody can hinder the course of the sun.

#### Verses 5b-7

David apparently thought that the most obvious way God showed his glory in the skies was by the sun. Many religions of David's time told people to worship the sun, because it is essential to life. David, however, taught the proper perspective. The sun is powerful, but we worship the God who made the sun.

All life on earth relies on the sun's light and heat for survival. Without it, nothing would be alive. Our planet would be just another frozen rock flying through space. As it is, the earth is exactly the perfect distance from the sun to not be either too hot or too cold for life. It has equal periods of day and night, so that one side doesn't get scorched while the other side freezes. The sun gives off just the right level of light and heat to support life, something no other star that we've discovered does. Our sun is also an unusually stable star. Not all the radiation from the sun is healthful, but earth's atmosphere filters out the lethal and allows the useful to enter. As David recognized the importance of the sun 3000 years ago, you and I can appreciate even more how God uses it to provide for us with what we know today.

It would be possible to go on and on about how the heavens and the skies show God's glory. Please, pick up a science book and learn more. Even in a quick discussion we can see many of his characteristics. We see that he is powerful. I can't create a universe, so he must be more powerful than I am. He is wise. The way that he designed the universe to work together so harmoniously is beyond my understanding. He is kind. He didn't have to make the skies so beautiful and interesting, but he did it for us. We also see that he is so much bigger than any of us, and that it wouldn't take much for him to destroy us if he wanted to. If all we knew about God was from the skies, we would not only be amazed, but we should also be afraid.

The skies reveal God the Creator. They cannot show God the Redeemer. Natural knowledge can convict the sinner, but it cannot save him. To see how God has become favorably disposed toward us, we need a more complete revelation from God.

#### Verse 8

תּוֹרַת יְהוָה תְּמִימָה מְשִׁיבַת נַפְשׁ עֲדוּת יְהוָה נְאֻמָּה מְחַכֶּמֶת פִּתִּי:

The instruction of the LORD is perfect, restoring a soul. The testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making wise a simple person.

Beginning with verse 8, David uses God's proper name, יְהוָה, "the LORD". He also speaks unmistakably about the written Word of God. He begins a list of six names of the Word, as well as six attributes of it, and six results that it produces. The first name that he uses for the Word is תּוֹרַת. Often translated "law," it means more than law in the strict sense here. "Instruction" may be more accurate. The first attribute of the Word that he highlights is that it is perfect or complete. It remains perfect, even when delivered by imperfect messengers. It delivers all the spiritual knowledge that we need. The first result that the Word of the Lord works is that it restores a soul. Restoring a soul is usually thought of as the work of the gospel – reviving and comforting the burdened conscience.

The word is a Hifil participle from **שוב**, so it could mean, and probably does include the idea of, working repentance. As with the rest of the results on the list, David probably wasn't trying to be specific to what we call law or gospel. Both law and gospel were in mind as he wrote about the Word as a whole.

The second name for the Word is "testimony." It reminds a person what he should and should not do, as well as what the Lord has done for him. The second attribute is that the Word is trustworthy. Everything it says can be trusted and it is the foundation of our lives. The second result of it is that it makes the simple wise. "The simple" is not an insult. They are those who listen to the Lord and believe what he says. They become wiser than any human philosopher, because they are instructed by the Word.

### Verse 9

פְּקוּדֵי יְהוָה יִשְׂרִים מְשִׁחִי־לֵב מִצְוֹת יְהוָה בְּרָה מְאִירַת עֵינָיִם:

The precepts of the LORD are right, gladdening a heart. The commands of the LORD are bright, enlightening eyes.

The third name for the Word is "precepts." His precepts, or teachings, include law and gospel. They are right in and of themselves, and they make people righteous. It brings joy to our hearts to know that we are righteous through faith in Jesus. Fourth, the commands of the Lord teach us who God is and what he has done and bring light to our eyes so that we know how we are to live.

### Verse 10

יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד מְשִׁפְטֵי־יְהוָה אֱמֶת צְדָקוֹ יִחַדּוּ:

The fear of the LORD is pure, standing forever. The judgments of the LORD are truth; they are just altogether.

The fifth name for the Lord's Word is the most unusual: **יִרְאַת**. This word seems like it would fit in better with the results of God's Word. Here it is used as a figure of speech, a result that the Word works used for the name of the Word itself. It is pure, like gold with no impurities. It endures forever and will never lose its value. Finally, there are the Lord's judgments. These are his decisions, and what he says goes. They are sure: absolute truth and completely dependable. They are altogether righteous, revealing what is right in the sight of the Lord. The Qal perfect **צְדָקוֹ** breaks the precise parallelism of verses 8-10, where participles otherwise were used.

### Verses 8-10

As amazing as it is to study the phenomenal things in the heavens, that is not the place where God teaches the most important things about himself. We learn far more about the Lord and the world and ourselves in his Word.

David's six different words that describe the Word of the Lord, along with its six characteristics and six results in our lives give us a complete description of the Lord's Word. The characteristics can't only be said of the Word, but can also be said of the Lord who reveals himself through his Word.

### Verse 11

הַנְּחֻמִּים מְזֶהָב וּמִפָּז רַב וּמִתּוֹקִים מְדַבֵּשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים:

They are more desirable than gold and much pure gold, and sweeter than honey and virgin honey of combs.

הַנְּחֻמִּים is a Nifal participle. Brug says it carries gerundive force, so that it means "to be desired." Its article has demonstrative force. זֶהָב represents the common Hebrew term for gold. פָּז is a word that only occurs nine times, and mostly in poetry. It probably means something like "pure gold." דַּבֵּשׁ is not necessarily bee honey, but could be other sweet syrups such as date sugar or grape syrup. נֹפֶת is bee honey of the best kind.

### Verse 12

גַּם־עַבְדְּךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשִׁמְרָם עֵקֶב רַב:

Also your servant is instructed in them. In keeping them is much reward.

נִזְהָר is a Nifal participle, whose basic meaning is "enlightened." "Instructed" and "warned" are derived meanings. The Lord's law does indeed warn us against sin and its consequences. The Lord's gospel enlightens us to his good and gracious will that he has accomplished for us, especially in the life and death of Jesus.

What rewards are there in keeping the Lord's Word? The gospel delivers the rewards that Christ won for the world in his life and death. Temporally, the Lord rewards people who keep his commands (e.g. the Fourth Commandment). Eternally, the Lord also does reward the good works of believers, even though we do not deserve such rewards (1 Corinthians 3:8). David may not be focusing on any of these in particular so much as he is generally extolling the blessings that come from the Word.

### Verses 11-12

In David's time, there was nothing that was more expensive than gold. It was the most valuable form of money. But the Word of the Lord is worth more. And there was nothing sweeter than honey. We're used to sugar and other sweeteners being in just about everything we eat. For people of David's time to enjoy sweetness, honey or something made from fruit was about all they had, and they really enjoyed it when they could afford it. Then and now, the Word of the Lord is worth more. Money and sugar may make our lives more enjoyable now. But the Word of the Lord brings wealth and pleasure now and forever. It warns us about the danger of our sins, so that we will repent of them. It gives us the rewards of what Jesus accomplished for us in his life and death, so that our sins are forgiven.

### Verse 13

שְׂגִיאוֹת מִיָּבִיז מִנְּסֻתָּרוֹת נִקְנִי:

Who will perceive transgressions? Leave me unpunished from hidden ones.

David has confessed the blessings that are his through the Lord's Word. Now it is only natural for him to confess his sins, so that they do not get in the way of him receiving the Lord's blessings. First, he confesses the sin that he commits, even though he doesn't realize it. These kinds of sins are proof of original sin. We are born with it, and we can't get away from it until we die. David prays with confidence that those sins will be forgiven, just as the Lord has promised he will.

### Verse 14

גַּם מְזִדִּים | חֲשֹׁד עֲבָדָי אֶל־יִמְשֻׁלוּ־בִּי אֲזִ אֵיתָם וְנִקִּיתִי מִפֶּשַׁע רָב:

Also keep your servant from insolent ones; they will not rule in me. Then I will be innocent and I will be without blame from great transgression.

What are "insolent ones"? Brown-Driver-Briggs says that it is preferable to think David is praying that the Lord would keep him from "presumptuous men," rather than "presumptuous sins." In context, though, "sins" fits better, because that is exactly what David was praying about in the previous verse. These are malicious, deliberate sins that arrogantly ignore what God says (as opposed to sins of weakness, which we commit, even though we do not want to commit them). David committed insolent sins when he took Bathsheba for himself and killed Uriah. The Lord even forgave those sins.

If we think that our own good intentions will keep us from committing those sins, we are in danger. It is only by the Lord's protection through his Word that we can be kept

from leaping into those sins. We, like David, pray that the Lord will keep our lives blameless and innocent of gross public or private sins.

#### Verses 13-14

The Lord's Word is great, but we have sinned against it. One category of sin that we have all committed is "hidden faults." These include the things we have done wrong in ignorance, when we did things that we didn't know were wrong. These also include the things we have done wrong in carelessness, when we sin and don't even notice it, because sin is so ingrained in our nature. Another category of sin is "willful sins." These include the sins that we commit even though we know they are wrong. These are dangerous sins, because when we commit them we are telling the Lord that we don't care what he says, we are going to do what we want to do. If we are in the habit of ignoring what the Lord says, we are in danger of losing our faith.

We wouldn't know how much we have sinned or how great the punishment is that we deserve if Lord hadn't taught us in his Word. We especially wouldn't know about how Jesus has lived and died to save us from our sins if the Lord hadn't told us about it in the Bible. We can't discover these things by looking at the sun, moon, or stars. We learn to ask the Lord for forgiveness and to trust him for mercy in his Word. The Bible teaches us to ask him to keep us from committing these sins and instead to live according to his commands out of thanks to him.

#### Verse 15

יְהִי לְרֵצוֹן אֱמֻרַי־כִּי וְהִגִּינוּ לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ יְהוָה צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי:

The word of my mouth and meditation of my heart will be what is pleasing before you,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

David closes with a prayer that not only his actions, but also his words and thoughts would please the Lord. לְרֵצוֹן is the language of an acceptable sacrifice. David's words and thoughts are set before the Lord as an offering.

We ask the Lord not only to forgive our sins, but to create pure hearts within us so that the words that we speak and the thoughts that we think are all pleasing to him. He is our Rock, who protects us. He is our Redeemer, who has bought us back from sin, death, and hell with his own life and death. By the power of the Word of God in our lives, the Lord will help us to live and act in thanks to him, because of all that he has done to create and save us. This closing prayer is worthy of memorization and incorporation into our own lives.



## **Psalm 19 & Creation Apologetics**

The assignment of this study included giving attention to Christian apologetics based on the first section of Psalm 19. Recent conferences have featured presentations on Christian apologetics and have provided helpful discussions on its uses and shortcomings. Psalm 19 has something to contribute to our discussion of apologetics. It teaches us that we can be sure what we see in the heavens is God's work. This gives us confidence that we can use the testimony of the heavens to teach other people about him. Several facts that can be studied further for apologetic use have been addressed in the commentary above.

Creation apologetics is useful in our day because one of the most pervasive religions we need to combat is evolution. We encounter people who object that they cannot believe the Bible, because what the Bible teaches does not agree with the "science" they learned in public school and on television. Creation apologetics may help us to handle those objections so that we can gain a hearing for the Lord's Word. Psalm 19 guides us in the way we use apologetics. We can point people to God's work in creation (Psalm 19:2-7), but we will use these arguments so that we can move on to speaking the Lord's Word (Psalm 19:8-12). It is the Lord's Word that will work justification and sanctification in people's hearts and lives (Psalm 19:13-15).

Many good resources are available to help Christians with their creation apologetic efforts. Answers in Genesis is a well-known organization that produces educational materials focusing on God's work in young-earth creation. They make it clear that the ultimate goal of their apologetic work is the delivery of the gospel. One caution is that some of their materials contain the pitch to make a decision for Christ. Otherwise, their material is faithful to Scripture. Another organization that works to promote an appreciation of God's work in creation is the Creation Research Society. This is a society that studies creation at a scholarly level. All members of this organization are required to sign a statement that they believe in a six-day creation and literal worldwide flood. They produce a quarterly journal written on a scholarly level and a bi-monthly newsletter written on a popular level. Other Christian organizations do similar work. These resources provide a Christian with the knowledge necessary to handle objections that attack what the Bible teaches. They are useful to prepare pastors to teach members and others to have confidence in what the Bible says about the God who created the universe. They are tools to help us proclaim the Word that reveals the Lord who saved the world.

Even if a pastor doesn't use Christian apologetics materials, he can pay attention to scientific matters that are going on in the world. A pastor is not called to be a scientist, and he will not devote more attention to science than to his study of the Lord's Word. But part of his work of teaching the Lord's Word is imparting a biblical worldview and

refuting the false worldviews that are in the air we breathe. If he is not prepared to refute an evolutionary worldview, it will appear to people that he is uneducated or afraid of science. We are not afraid of science. We are convinced that what the Bible teaches is true. We owe it to our members and to everyone we to whom we proclaim the gospel to be able to help them understand the truth of what the Bible teaches about creation.

### **The Lectionary & Preaching**

Psalm 19 appears in the Christian Worship lectionary in three contexts: Lent 3B, Epiphany 3C, and Pentecost 16C.

On Lent 3B, Psalm 19 is used in combination with Exodus 20:1-17 (the Lord speaks the Ten Commandments), 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 (Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified")/Romans 8:1-10 (what the law was powerless to do, God did in Christ), and John 2:13-22 (Jesus clears the temple). The emphasis of Psalm 19 in that context is on the high value of the Lord's Word.

On Epiphany 3C, Psalm 19 is used in combination with Isaiah 61:1-12 (the Messiah preaches good news to the poor), Acts 4:23-31 (the Christians experienced fulfillment of prophecy and prayed that Jesus would continue taking away sadness and giving joy through them), and Luke 4:14-21 (Jesus announces that he is the fulfillment of Isaiah 61). The emphasis of Psalm 19 in that context is on the blessings that come to us from Jesus through his Word.

On Pentecost 16C, Psalm 19 is used in combination with Proverbs 9:8-12 (a wise man fears the Lord), Philippians 3:4b-11 (I want to know Christ), and Luke 14:25-33 (a wise man counts the cost of being Jesus' disciple). The emphasis of Psalm 19 in that context is that the Word of God makes the simple wise.

Psalm 19 is also the psalm appointed for the festival of St. Andrew, Apostle on November 30. It is used in combination with Ezekiel 3:16-21 (the Lord says Ezekiel is a watchman to warn the wicked), Romans 10:10-18 (faith comes from hearing the message spoken by the preacher), and John 1:35-42 (Andrew follows Jesus and tells Peter). The emphasis of Psalm 19 in that context is that a person is warned and finds great reward in the Word of the Lord.

In all four of these lectionary contexts, Psalm 19's use focuses on the Lord revealed through his Word more than God revealed through his creation. A sermon on Psalm 19 will extol the blessings that come through the natural knowledge of God in creation, but will find its main focus on the great blessings that come to us as the Lord reveals himself in his Word.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus doesn't reveal himself by standing before our congregations today, as he did in Nazareth. Nevertheless, as Psalm 19 explains, the way he reveals himself really hasn't changed. The Nazarenes were blessed to see him and hear him speak that Sabbath day. But you and I and our congregations aren't left to wonder who Jesus is. Just as he has been doing ever since creation, God has revealed his glory through what we see in the heavens. Just as in Nazareth's synagogue, the Lord reveals himself to us in his Word. The Lord reveals himself as he works in us to bring us to repentance and forgiveness and a holy life.

Jesus may not stand visibly before the congregation that you serve, but he does speak to you and to the rest of your members. Every time you hear and read and preach his Word, Jesus is revealing himself to you and through you to your people. As you and they listen to and trust his Word together, Jesus is bringing you the blessings of forgiveness and life. Through his Word, Jesus reveals himself to us!

## Appendix – A Psalm 19 Bible Class



### Psalm 19

"The Lord Reveals Himself"

1. In Creation
2. In His Word
3. In Justification and Sanctification



**Who is the author of this psalm?** In surrounding psalms, David praises the Lord for delivering him from his enemies. In Psalm 19 David leads the congregation in praising God for the glory that he reveals in creation, his Word, and in the believers' life.



### Part 1 – Verses 1-6



**Where are "the heavens"? How do they "declare the glory of God"?** Sometimes Scripture uses the term "heaven" to describe the place where God dwells. Here "heavens" describes the part of God's creation that is above the earth. This word takes us back to God's work in Genesis 1:1 ("heavens") and 1:8 ("sky"). They make plain several of God's attributes, including his power and wisdom.

**What are "the skies"? How do they "proclaim the work of his hands"?** "The skies" are synonymous with "the heavens." (Explain parallelism in Hebrew poetry.) This word takes us back to Genesis 1:6-8 when God created the "expanse"/"vault" (NIV1984/2011) or "firmament" (KJV). They make plain that creation was put together by a designer.

**How do the heavens and skies speak and declare knowledge?** The planets in their orderly orbits, the stars in their constellations, the ways the moon benefits the earth, the beauty of the sunsets speak no audible word. They silently but visually leave people without excuse for denying God's existence.

**In what way does the sun specifically show God's work?** The sun may be the most obvious example of the Lord's work in the heavens. The sky is its tent. It wakes up and comes out every morning. Its life-sustaining reappearance brings happiness. It cannot be stopped. It brings light and heat to all. Without the sun, there is no life on earth.

**What do these verses say to the pagan? the astrologer? the evolutionist?** The pagan worships the creation (e.g. the ancient Egyptians and the sun). But creation testifies to its creator, not to itself. The astrologer tries to tell the future with the stars and planets. But the skies don't speak about the future as they do about the creator. The evolutionist sees the sky as evidence of the big bang and random change. But the skies make it clear that they were carefully designed and are still controlled by the Almighty One.

**What can the heavens tell us about God? What can't they tell us about him?** Creation reveals God the creator. It cannot show God the Redeemer. Natural knowledge can convict the sinner, but it cannot save him. We can see from creation that God is powerful, wise, kind, and can destroy us. It does not tell us how he has become favorably disposed toward us. We need a more complete revelation of God, which the rest of the psalm describes.



### Part 2 – Verses 7-11



**What words does David use to speak about God's Word? What does each one of them say about his Word?** Law (or instruction, because it includes gospel), statutes (what God says), precepts (teaching), commands (show us the right way to live), fear (using the result of the Word as a name for the Word), and ordinances (God's judgments).

**What attributes does David use to describe God's Word? What does each one of them say about his Word?** Perfect (even when delivered by imperfect messengers, it delivers all the spiritual knowledge we need), trustworthy (everything it says can be trusted), right (correct, just, and proper), radiant (it shows us the right way), pure (causes a person to fear God correctly), sure (absolute truth).

**What results does God's Word produce in our lives?** It revives the soul (refreshes burdened consciences), makes the simple wise (trust in God is wisdom), gives joy to the heart (comforts the despairing), gives light to the eyes (teaches the knowledge of God), enduring forever (will never go away, but stands up despite its enemies), altogether righteous (completely righteous and makes people righteous).

**How is the Word of God more valuable than gold? How is the Word of God more pleasurable than honey?** Gold was the most valuable thing in the world. Honey was the sweetest and most pleasurable thing in the world. But only God's Word gives eternal wealth and pleasure.

**How does God's Word warn a Christian? How does God's Word reward a Christian?** God's law warns people against sin and its consequences. The gospel delivers the rewards that Christ won for the world. Temporally, life is better when we keep God's commands. Eternally, the Lord rewards the good works of believers, even though we do not deserve it.



### Part 3 – Verses 12-14



**What are our "hidden faults"? What do we ask God to do about them?** These include sins that we do not know are wrong (sins of ignorance) or that we do not even notice when we commit them (careless sins). Even though sin is so ingrained in our nature that we often sin without even realizing it, God is willing to forgive these sins!

**What are our "willful sins"? What do we ask God to do about them?** These are deliberate sins committed in arrogant pride, which destroy faith (as opposed to sins of weakness, which we commit even though we know better and do not want to commit them). David did commit such sins with Bathsheba's adultery and Uriah's murder. Yet the Lord forgave those. We pray that God would keep us from committing these sins.

**How is the Lord our Rock? How is the Lord our Redeemer?** He is our protector and our Savior. Jesus redeemed us from sin, death, and the devil with his life and death.

**How can we be confident that the Lord will grant our prayer at the end of the psalm?** This will be the case by the power of the Word of God in our lives. This prayer is worthy of memorization and incorporation into our prayer lives.