

Psalm 19 Matt Taylor 31st May 2026

Have you ever been lost? We went to Chatsworth last week with some friends and there's a maze, which is amazing fun, going into the maze and we were trying to find our way to the centre and then we heard the cries and screams of one of our little kids. Had they fallen over? Had they got into a fight with a sibling? No. "I was lost." It's a thing of nightmares, isn't it? In a maze. Hedges higher than double your height. Dead end after dead end. I can't find my way to the centre. What is the way? This morning we're going to be asking a far more important question than what's the way to the centre of a maze. What is the way to the good place? What is the way to the good place? Heaven. The presence of God. The Father's house. The place that is only good all the time. The place of solid joys and lasting treasure. What is the way to the house of the Father?

Maybe you've come across this metaphor that is often proclaimed to us, that there are many paths up the mountain. And we're all finding our different ways to God and you can choose path A, B, C, D or E or F or create your own way up to God. Maybe you've heard this. But in reality, I think we're far more like the child lost in the maze. Facing dead end after dead end. The past looks so different. How do we know the way? And we just feel lost, directionless. And maybe we are following the Christian path, but those questions of doubt come into our minds. Is this really the right way? And Psalm 19 is given to us to answer this question of how do we come to the presence of God?

We've been thinking about Psalms 15 through to 24 in this term. And Psalms 15 and 24 answer the question of who it is that can come into God's presence. Who it is that can ascend the mountain of God. And in the centre, Psalm 19 answers the question of how is it that someone can come into

God's presence? And the answer, we'll see, chimes with what Jesus said to his disciples. On the night before he died, Simon Peter asks him, Lord, where are you going? And Jesus says, where I'm going, you can't follow me. You can't come up the mountain. You can't come into my father's house, but I'm going there to prepare a place for you. And then Tamer says to him, Lord, how can we know the way? And Jesus says, I am the way. See, the teaching of scripture from beginning to end is that there is one way into God's presence, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And Psalm 19 proclaims that to us this morning. And we're going to dive into it in three sections this morning.

1. Hear the call of the heavens (1-6)

Look with me to verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands. See, David at the beginning of this Psalm is inviting us to lift our eyes and to look up to the heavens, whether it's day or night, to look up and listen. And listen to the declaration, the proclamation, glory to God. We are the work of his hands. That is the message of the heavens.

The other week I was given, as my parents visited, this little marquetry piece that my grandfather has made. Marquetry, if you didn't know, is making a picture with thin decorative wood veneer cut out and stuck together. And I shared this on the family WhatsApp group and everyone responded with those phrases of wow, amazing. To think that you can choose little bits of wood, cut them out and they can make a wonderful picture. What skill, how clever our ancestor was as he made this.

That is the right response, isn't it? To creative beauty. And that is the response that the heavens are calling for. See the message comes out day after day, verse 2. It's a continual proclamation. It's, at verse 3, an inaudible voice. Verse 4, it is universal. Nowhere where there is no access to this voice declaring the glory of God.

Do you hear the call of the heavens? Paul writes in Romans chapter 1 that since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power, his divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Glory to God, we are the work of his hands. That is the message of the heavens. But as David continues in Psalm 19, he focuses in at the end of verse 4 to one object in the sky. In on the sun.

We'll come to Genesis 1 in a moment. But have a look with me to the end of verse 4. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It's a dramatic picture of what then ensues. For the sun is likened to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber with that enthusiastic eagerness of a man on his wedding day. Or, end of verse 5, like a champion rejoicing to run his course, an Olympian getting ready to run the race that they know they're going to win.

Rising in the east, setting in the west, the sun is calling us to worship God. It runs its path day by day, proclaiming, Glory to God, I am the work of his hands.

Now when it comes to the sun, there are two traps, aren't there, we fall into as humanity. Throughout history, humans have worshipped the sun, that the sun itself is a god. On the other hand, we diminish the sun, that it's just a plasmasphere of hydrogen and helium producing a chemical reaction that produces heat and light.

We diminish what the sun is or we elevate it and worship it as a god. But David says, no, the sun is more than just a ball of gas burning brightly in the sky. But it is not God, for it calls us to worship the one true God.

Now diving into Psalm 19, I think there is a reason why David calls us to look at the sun and not the savannah at this moment. You see, if we go back to Genesis 1, you'll see it here, the sun in the day's sky, the moon and the stars at night, they're placed there for a reason.

Moses writing Genesis says they're there to serve as signs to mark sacred times, the times to come together to worship the Lord. Whether it's the moon causing, signalling the new moon festivals, or the calendar to which God's people are to gather, or the sun day by day, week by week, calling God's people to gather to worship him.

They are, as Michael Morales has put it, lamps fixing the annual days of religious festivals, serving us to call to worship for humanity. The sun, the moon, the stars are fixed in the heavens, calling the whole of creation to worship God.

You see, this vision of coming into the presence of God is not just for David or for Israel in their small little people in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. No, this is a cosmic call to bring us back to the purpose we are created for, to find relationship with the living God.

2. Taste the reward of the law.

See there's a shift in the Psalm, as was drawn out by Alan and Anne changing the voice as it's read out, from the general revelation of the heavens to the specific revelation of the law.

And what you think about God's law shows in the way you treat it. The way you treat God's word shows what you think about it.

So I was given a Bible when I was age 13 on my confirmation by my parents. And I distinctly remember as a teenager that Bible sat on my bedside table and it gathered dust. I have a very vivid memory of being able to draw a pattern on the amount of dust, which will have shown also how much I cleaned my room as a teenager. But as a teenager, I thought the Bible was boring, irrelevant, untrue. So why would I open it up and read it?

But that is not what God's king David, writing about God's law, says. Look at verse 10. God's law is more precious than gold, than much pure gold. It's sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

Is that what you would say about God's Word? In verses 7 to 9, we get this wonderful little poem, in a poem, about God's Word. It's six lines long. Each line in Hebrew has five words. And there's a really beautiful pattern to it. So there's a synonym, a word describing God's word: the law, the statutes, the precepts, the commands, the fear, the decrees of the Lord. Notice there's one that's slightly different, we'll come to that in a moment, the fear of the Lord. And then there's an adjective describing what it is. So it is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure and firm. And then what it does. It refreshes, it makes wise, it gives joy, it gives light, it endures, it enacts righteousness. And then finally we get what it changes: the soul, the simple, the heart, the eyes.

See here in this poem within a poem, we get a real reflection on what the scriptures are. I just want to draw your eyes to a few. We could spend the whole time in these verses. But firstly, verse 7: The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. That word refreshing is the word for causing to repent, to turn around. The law of the Lord repents the soul, the inward being of the person. And that is why I think the law of the Lord is so central to the salvation we saw a couple of weeks ago in Psalm 18.

So right at the heart of Psalm 18 on page 551, David writes, all his laws are before me. I've kept the ways of the Lord. I've kept myself from sin. You see, God's law is perfect. It shows us the right way. It causes us to return to the Lord, to repent and receive forgiveness. There's also connections. The wonderful line which we sing in the kids' song: You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning. Verse 28 of Psalm 18: My God turns my darkness to light. You see the echo there in verse 8.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. We walk in a darkness. Morally speaking, we don't know what's ahead of us, but God's Word shines its light, showing us right from wrong. So what about that line in verse 9, the fear of the Lord is pure? You see every other one is a synonym about God's word. But here we have a response to the word of the Lord. Why is that included?

Well in Deuteronomy chapter 17, in the law governing the kings, the king is to be of God's choice. It's to be an Israelite, not a foreigner. The king is not allowed to have lots of horses, many wives or much money.

But what he is to do positively is to write out for himself a copy of the law, the first five books of the Bible. Imagine that. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That's where you start. All the way to the end of Deuteronomy chapter 30-something. All the way through, writing it out in your own hand. It's going to sink in, isn't it? And he's not only just to write it out, he's to read it all the days of his life. Day by day, reading on it, meditating on it. Why? So that he might revere, literally to fear the Lord his God, and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.

You see, it is the king who is going to shepherd God's people to worship God on his mountain. He is the one who is going to fear the Lord. And if he's going to do that, well, it is the scriptures that are going to guide him, are going to give him that fear of the Lord that is pure and endures forever.

Psalm 18 gave us a hint at this, that the goal of these Psalms isn't just for little Israel in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. No, the scope is for the nations. It's for the whole of creation. Psalm 18, verse 42: You have made me the head of the nations. Morales again says this: The Davidic king reigned to shepherd humanity to the house of God upon the mountain of God. The sun proclaims it. The king shepherds God's people into the presence of God.

So as we come to the end of this little section, how do we view God's Word? Like I did as a teenager? On the bedside, gathering dust? Boring, irrelevant, untrue? It couldn't be further from the truth. The perfect, right, radiant, pure, firm, sure Word of God, that in keeping it there is great reward, because by it our king leads the way into God's presence. Taste the reward of the law.

3. See the need for our rock and redeemer.

The call to worship of the heavens, the precious and sweet warnings of the law, are not all that is needed for the king. No, he needs to see that Yahweh the Lord is his rock and his redeemer. Right at the end, that prayer: Lord, my rock and my redeemer. See, in verses 12 and 13, we get multiple ways in which the problem that faces the king is described. Do you notice it? Who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults, my willful sins, my great transgression. That is the reason we were kicked out of God's presence in the first place in the Garden of Eden. It's the reason why we can't hear the call of the heavens. Why we hate God's law. It is because of the sin in our own hearts.

The king's great problem needs the rock and the redeemer to answer it. I don't know if you have come across what is known in the psychological world as the Johari window. I think it's a useful model to show what we're like as humans. It basically explains that there are parts of yourself that you know and that I can see. There are parts of me that you know and I know. Those are the open areas.

But there are parts of me that I know but you don't. That's the hidden area of my life. What's going on in my thoughts right now, for example. But there are also bits of me that you can see that I can't see. That's my blind spots. It's a bit like physically the stuff that you can see my hand moving now and I can't see it now because it's in my blind spot. But this is where the psychologists say that there's a real dangerous place. It's the bit of me that I don't know and you don't know. It's the unknown person.

Now I think this is really helpful as we apply it to our own sin. Because Psalm 19 says, verse 12: Who can discern their own errors? And that word errors is used in Leviticus of the unintentional sins. The sins that we do that we do not know that we're doing. Unknown to us.

You could say they are the hidden, unknowable things. And by nature, we're all fallible. And that is why we need each other. The Psalm doesn't go into this, but elsewhere in the Bible it does. We need to bring ourselves into

the light. We need others to do that. I need you to show me my blind spots, the things I can't see, the sin I can't see.

But it's also why we need God to do that. Because God sees everything. And wonderfully God is the one who sees into the unknowable areas. And that is why we should be crying out to the Lord, or why the king should be crying out to the Lord, to keep me from willful sins, those open transgressions, that they might not rule over me.

But innocent of all great transgression, the known and the unknown. And what is wonderful, if we step into the light, look with me to verse 12, the God we know is not going to cancel us or drive us out, but he is a God of forgiveness. And he is the one who will declare us righteous and blameless. For he is the rock, the provider, our refuge. He is our redeemer, the saving God of Psalm 18, whose cords of death are wrapped around us. He is the one who will rescue us out of the pit. He is the one who will keep the king in the path of righteousness.

See, the king forever needed to know the rock and the redeemer, praying, verse 14, day by day: May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. For only the pleasing one of God can enter into his presence.

So as we come to a close this morning, what is the way to the good place? Maybe it is this morning you're visiting for the first time. A friend's invited you along this morning. Welcome. Maybe it is you're forging your way up the mountainside, trying to get to God and forging your own path. God says to us in his word that only perfection is possible and none of us are perfect. Only Jesus is the one who has provided the way. Maybe we look to the heavens and there's just this niggle in the back of our minds that there must be more. That the Big Bang doesn't explain the bigger why questions. There must be more to the world that God has made.

That's the call of the heavens calling to you this morning. Can I encourage you to dive into God's word, to taste God's law, for it points us ultimately to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The one who is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean and true. The way to God himself. And do we see our need of Jesus? Maybe this morning we are following Jesus. That will be many of us here this morning. But there are times in our lives when we doubt that we're following the right way. Do we see that Jesus is truly the sun, S-U-N? He is truly the bridegroom, the champion, who declares the glory of God to all the earth.

When you look at Jesus, do you see the glory of God? Look at Jesus and see the glory of God.

Jesus is the word of God made flesh, the perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true one who gives refreshment to weary souls, wisdom to the clueless, joy to our hearts, the light of life to those who walk in darkness.

By his resurrection he endures forever and he is altogether righteous.

Don't be like those Pharisees who studied the scriptures diligently but refused to come to Jesus, the word made flesh.

And do we see Jesus as the true king, the servant of the Lord, who kept the law perfectly, receiving the greatest reward as he rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father?

Who we, united to him, can come into God's presence, can be declared blameless and innocent from sin, not because of anything we've done, but all because we're united to him by faith.

Brothers and sisters, come to Jesus day by day. As you open God's word, be drawn to him and enjoy walking in his presence, looking forward to the day when we will see him face to face and we will have that permanent place in the Father's house forever.

Let me close this in a prayer.

Jesus said, "I am the way. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Lord, help us to know that to be true. Help us to hear the call of the heavens, to taste the sweetness of your word, to see our need of Jesus, our rock and our redeemer. And help us to come to you through him day by day we pray, for your glory's sake.

Amen.