

Creation – Sky
Psalm 19:1-6
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
September 16, 2018
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

Psalm 19:1-6 (NRSV) God's Glory in Creation and the Law

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament^[a] proclaims his handiwork.

² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

⁴ yet their voice^[b] goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens^[c] he has set a tent for the sun,

⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

What is dominion?

When you look at the bulletin cover, the Creation series continues and uses the word DOMINION.

What is that!?

The most well-known use of the word in the Bible is at the point, during Creation, that God gives humanity *dominion* over other animals. In some senses, then, it's an "old-timey" word for having power.

Another way of thinking about it would involve rulers (male or female) having power and control over their country and the people.

The Christmas before I graduated from high school, lo, these many years ago, my brother gave me THIS *gianourmous* edition of Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary to take to college. That was back when we still looked up words in a book and used the thesaurus. We didn't have computer programs to find a synonym. I use

the internet a lot, but I still keep that dictionary on my desk, next to the computer...a reminder of Dennis and the power of words.

Definitions teach us what words mean, but so does our experience.
Think about the word “weed.”

NOT Colorado weed!

You garden lovers and meticulous yard keepers probably have you own definition for weeds that’s probably not repeatable.

But, could you agree that a weed is “a plant growing where it is not wanted and in competition with cultivated plants.” Yes?

This definition is based on OUR interaction with weeds.
A weed is where we don’t want it, right?

But: God created dandelions to **be** dandelions.

That means they grow when conditions are right for them to grow.

And even though we consider them weeds, dandelions are a food source for bees and other animals, including humans (when we choose an adventurous green salad.)

They are kinda pretty. (I took a picture of one in a manicured garden in Europe!)

And, they can be a source of entertainment.

Remember, as a kid, picking them and blowing on them to watch the seed scatter?

So when kids hear us say that dandelions are weeds, then children will associate them as something bad, something unwanted. (I even scrunch up my face to say WEEDS!)

And, what do dandelions have to do with dominion?

In both Genesis 1 and 2, humanity was given dominion and responsibility to take care of the earth.

Dominion was given to humanity before sin existed (that came in chapter 3.)

So, is there a difference in what dominion is between God's perfect Creation and after the fall into sin?

Not if we give it some thought.

If we, people who are created in God's image DO dominion it can't be harsh or forceful or unloving because that is not God's nature or our created image, even after the Fall!

Consider: What do you suppose God must feel when looking at Creation? And, does YOUR thinking, from THAT perspective, change your definition of dominion?

I would put out there that the opposite of what God intends for Creation would be *exploitation*.

That word has a negative connotation for me. How 'bout you?

One definition is *"the use or utilization, especially for profit: selfish utilization."*

Again, think of looking at Creation from God's perspective.
How's THAT feel?

Last week, we talked about mountains.

We know, quite well in Colorado, that mountains and their ecosystems are home to plants, birds, amphibians, and mammals and US.

Some mountains are exploited, as we touched on last Sunday, in coal mining sites for instance, blown up to make money, with no regard to the life that depends upon them.

Today, let's talk about another part of Creation and what, according to Scripture, shows up in the sky?

What if the sky was blocked from view?

We do enough of that when we spend so much of our time indoors or outside when our faces are buried in our phones.

We humans block the sky with pollution.

In 2014, in Beijing, China, smog was so bad that people wore air masks.

They were so starved for the sun that TV stations broadcast scenes of sunrises throughout the city.

Is it any wonder that the UMC puts environmental justice in our Social Principles??

I recall one time, during a break in a meeting, I gazed out the window. From my vantage point, I could see into the fenced yard across the drive. Next to the fence, on my side was a tall security light. And behind the light, attached to the post, there was a square of metal.

What's that there for?

Folks familiar with the location told me that the metal was supposed to reflect light back into the drive BUT not the other way into the neighbor's yard. Maybe they'd complained.

Or maybe the building owners (who had dominion) were being considerate so that the light wouldn't pollute the neighbors' backyard.

'Cause frankly, our choices affect people and the rest of God's Creation. Whether it's outdoor lighting, emissions, or other human devices, the skies and animals and humans are endangered.

God created the sky.

God, the Creator, is revealed to us there.

Are we paying attention?

Do we take time to enjoy what God has created; to observe what God does?

Ann read for us: *"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork."*

Do we experience this aspect of God if we can't see it or choose not to pay attention?

When we study the verses of the Bible we recall that the sky brings us clouds...

- The rainbow Noah saw for God's covenant

- We read about angels, and a certain bright star in the sky
- The sky (the heavens we'd read) were opened at Jesus' baptism,
- And it went very dark at his crucifixion.

In today's verses, the sky speaks and tells us about its Creator.

While we were in Europe last month, though the cultures and languages AND FOOD was often different from what I am accustomed, one of the things that was familiar was the sky.

Now, Toto – we weren't in Colorado anymore so that particular color of blue wasn't *there* - BUT there was sunrise and sunset, stars and clouds and weather.

Rain in Colorado Springs, is like rain in Nuremburg, Germany.

When we saw the forecast for our day excursion in Nuremburg had a 70% chance of rain, we knew what to wear and to put our umbrellas in the backpack.

The point is that the sky is God's.

No matter who you are or where you are, the sky speaks of God, and everyone understands.

Verse 4-6 of Psalm 19 make me smile.

The sun has a purpose and does it joyfully; it has a path; and it parades itself, providing heat.

It did a fine, over-fine job this week, eh? It was H-O-T "warm"!

See, God not only created what we see, but God also created systems that give life and direction.

Further into today's Psalm, we'd hear of laws and decrees, precepts, commandment, and fear.

Interesting!

These are mentioned after a stunning visual of the skies declaring God's glory.

So, this psalm, then, refers to more than God's laws for us.

It also discusses the systems that God put in place for the world to function.

Theses aren't just the laws Moses wrote down, but laws of nature:

- how the sun travels,
- the movement from day to night;
- how our bodies respond (like with sleep.)

Remember that the Creation story ends each day with God declared each part good!

God commanded everything to be fruitful and multiply; to do their Created part of the goodness.

Will you turn with me and Ann to page 751 in the back of your hymnal where Psalm 19 is as a responsive reading and let's share it.

Did you notice that the phrases with noun were paired with a verb?

There is (after nouns describing a law or precept or commandment) the verbs:

- reviving,
- making,
- rejoicing,
- enlightening,
- and enduring.

Only the word ordinances is followed with adjectives (true, righteous).

Put them all together, and there is only good.

The rebellious part of me has always considered laws, decrees, precepts, commandments, and fear as bad things; things that restrict.

But, after reading this Psalm, (and I'll pray you are too) I'm convinced that good happens with obedience. And that's VERY good.

It says in these verses that the guidelines of obedience to God *is to be sought after more than gold.*

And when we learn from them, *they taste as sweet as honey.*

AND we're rewarded!!

That's exciting, isn't it?

Kinda makes us more enthusiastic to know more of God's word?

God's timing is here today!

For this Rally-Restart-Return Sunday, please be sure that Ann or Twink or I get your responses to the bulletin insert about a study you'd like to be doing as a small group. God's Word, as full of delights as the sky, IS SO GOOD, it's something to celebrate!

Will you pray with me:

Creator God, thank You for your life-giving Word that brings us wisdom and joy and examples that draw us closer to you. Help us to continue listening, in the words of Your son, in the psalms and each word in between. We praise you for your Holy Spirit that empowers us to receive your teaching. Amen!