

## WAYS WE WORSHIP

*Theme for 2023: Created to Worship*

Psalm 19:1-14

Chadron Berean Church

Imagine with me that you have a severe cold, so you go to the doctor and the doctor prescribes for you a prescription of some kind like an antibiotic, and it helps you get over it. A couple of months go by, and you find yourself now with a stomachache. Again, he prescribes the same thing. As you're leaving, you run into an acquaintance and realize they were prescribed the same thing for their migraines. You kind of question it, but you go ahead and take it, not sure if it helped you or not. A couple of more months go by, you fall off your horse, break your arm, and the doctor sends you home with the same prescription! At this point you're thinking you need to find another doctor, right? Everyone knows you can't treat every malady or every person the same way. Well, that's a good picture of what I want to talk about when it comes to understanding how we were created to engage with God in worship.

That's the definition for worship that I've been drawn to in my studies, is to think of worship as *a continual, relational, engaging with God*. It's not just something we do for an hour on Sunday, but something we do 24/7/365 with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. It's an all day, every day relational communion with God. Worship occurs as we bring our lives into a proper orientation with the true and living God on His terms.<sup>1</sup> We live in response to His reality.

Worship also has both *private and corporate* elements. *Personal and communal*. We see a lot of personal worship in the Psalms as David expressing the deep things going on in his heart and mind to God. But sometimes the worship is corporate. It's something God's people do together, as we're doing this morning. The psalm we will study today has personal elements but it was also meant to be sung corporately. Today, however, I want to emphasize the personal side of worship. There is a danger in over-personalizing worship, forgetting the communal side of worship and drifting from the biblical instructions for proper worship, but I do think it's worth our time to consider how we are created uniquely with what I want to call *worship temperaments*. We are created with unique blends of personalities, talents, interests, and spiritual gifts, and I think that bleeds over into our life of worship.

Worship brings healing to our lives, but we find healing from different maladies differently. One person may connect more with God one way and another person a different way. Some of us tend to worship more through creation, some through music, some through intellect, some through serving. We all obviously worship in all these ways, but not to equal degrees. Think of it in the context of a family. Every kid is different. One kid might be introvert, preferring to play by themselves and build the Lego tower on their own, while the other is a social butterfly and can't imagine building a Lego tower by themselves. One is a thinker and loves to read. The other is a doer and prefers to work with their hands. This means that when you go to spend time with each

kid individually, you may do so differently. With one kid you're reading books together and talking, the other you're going fishing or building sandcastles... and crushing them like Godzilla. You connect with each kid differently, and that's how it should be. It would be awful if God used a cookie cutter when He made us. Point being, we are all part of a larger family—the family of God. And I believe that as His children, we tend to connect with our Heavenly Father slightly differently. Simply stated, my goal in today's message is that as a result of this message, you will either start thinking about how to feed your soul personally through worship. As we go through Psalm 19 and see talk about the different ways we worship, think about which ones you're drawn to more and tend to

Psalm 19 is a great passage to spend our time in as we think along these lines. The word “psalm” can mean “praise,” “sing,” or “music,” but the psalms are not just about singing.<sup>2</sup> We learn so much about what a *life of worship* looks like from the Psalter: the heart, the posture, the language and the practices of worship.<sup>3</sup> This psalm in particular is a psalm of **confident praise** and David wrote it for **corporate worship**. It was made for God's people to sing together. We know that from the heading. It's written “*for the choir director.*”

## I. PRAISE FOR GOD SPEAKING THROUGH HIS WORKS. (VV. 1-6)

*The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And the expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
2 Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
3 There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.  
4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,  
5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;  
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.  
6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,  
And its circuit to the other end of them;  
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

So praise is given to God for the **work of God's hands** in creation, specifically the **heavens** with the sun, moon, and stars. He is the **all-powerful Creator God** (*El*; v. 1) who fashioned them in His **handiwork**. The man who wrote this was a shepherd who wasn't blinded by city lights and skyscrapers. He knew the sunrises, sunsets, and starry skies well. They're not an accident, but artwork! And we should praise the Artist for them since they remind us of Him and His **glory** and power. I have some pictures of the stormy skies over Scottsbluff on Friday night. What a powerful display that was! It reminded me that storms are powerful. They can bless or destroy. So too with God. He has both grace and wrath, mercy and judgment, depending upon relationship to Christ.

To amplify what David's saying, we should note that when David speaks of the sun as a **bridegroom** and a **strong person** running his course and that **no one can hide from his its heat**, he is using figures of speech that pagans used to describe the sun, which they worshipped as a sovereign.<sup>4</sup> So in contrast to the sun-god worshippers, who called the sun their god, David is saying yes, the sun is strong but it's a strong *servant* of God that carries out *His* bidding. How foolish to serve/worship the sun when the sun serves/worships God! The heavens are not something to worship, but a reason to worship God who made them. And there's two ways we can learn to worship in these 6 verses.

### **We worship God through music.**

This is a psalm after all! This was made to be sung! And as one person said, "*It's impossible to overstate the importance of music in worship.*"<sup>5</sup> It's what we generally think of when we think of worship! Every Sunday, we worship by singing! We sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). It's what we were made to do. All of us, no matter our voice—even we you sound like a crow or cat—should love making a joyful noise to our Lord! But I will say that on an individual basis, God has wired some folks to really appreciate worship in music and it's a primary go-to to connect with God. In the OT, we see in David's day how God wires people to be skillful in singing and playing instruments. Those who are wired for it are also trained to do it better. David made sure people were trained to lead worship. We all know people, it doesn't matter where they are, they always have headphones in and if not, they have a melody in their head. When they have alone time in the car, their first thought is not to listen to the news or a theology podcast or sermon—they want to sing!

### **We worship God through creation.**

Many of us connect with God through nature and the outdoors. Why? Because David says that creation points us to God, the Creator! But we call this the doctrine of **natural or general revelation**. God revealing Himself through creation and conscience. Look at verses 1-4. Even though the **heavens** don't speak with any sort of speech or words, they "**declare**" the **glory** and the **works** of God. It's quite an oxymoron, isn't it? Something that has no voice speaks! **Day to day**, from sunup to sundown, 24/7/365, their **line**—their **voice**—speaks to **all the earth** about His power and majesty. In Romans 1, the apostle Paul talks about this too. He says that God has revealed His **invisible attributes**, specifically His eternal power and divine nature, so plainly through creation that all men are without excuse for their sinful rebellion against Him. Men actually have to work to *suppress the truth* that an all-powerful, holy God exists and therefore, man's condemnation is just. Paul even quotes this Psalm 19:4 to explain the condemnation of Jews who don't believe (Rom. 10:18). So no one can stand before God on judgment day and say, "*I didn't know there was a God.*" Why? The evidence is all around us! That which is known about God is evident *within us* because it is evident *to us*. It's another oxymoron in that's invisible has been clearly seen (Rom. 1:20). I'll remind us of the words of the classic hymn, *How Great Thou Art*:

“When through the woods and forest glades I wander,  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.  
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur

And see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.  
Then sings my soul, My Saviour God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art, How great Thou art.”

Let me paraphrase that: when I walk through woods, hear the birds sing, see the towering mountains and yet feel the gentleness of the breeze, I think, “*Wow, God is great.*” When we think about the infinite universe and understand He measures it with the palm of His hand (Is. 40:12), we can sing, “*How great Thou art!*” “During the French Revolution, Jean Bon St. Andre, [a] revolutionist, said to a peasant, ‘I will have all your steeples pulled down, that you may no longer have any objects by which you may be reminded of your old superstitions.’ ‘But,’ replied the peasant, ‘you cannot help leaving us the stars.’”<sup>6</sup> I like that. It’s no wonder that being out in creation sparks many of us to praise God. Unfortunately, being born in a sterile environment, boxed around in cars, and living inside plastered walls with screens to stare at all day, our appreciation for creation is stunted, to say the least. My encouragement to you is to spend some time outdoors this summer, without the devices. Your screentime will go way down and you won’t miss a thing.

I’ll say that sunsets and starry skies have been known to stop me in my tracks. I recall many evenings in my farming days, shutting the tractor down just to praise God as I watched the sunset. Some of you are like me—stirred to worship through creation. That’s where you connect. Hunting, fishing, gardening, hiking, camping, or just sitting on the porch and listening to the birds sing or watching the clouds roll by... that’s where you find yourself longing to be, especially when you start feeling empty and needing refreshment. You need to be in “God’s country.” Sometimes, when my regular devotional gets too routine-ish and the books grow stale, I make an escape for the wilderness, or I go to work in the garden. I can’t tell you how many spiritual lessons I learn gardening. There are certain parts of my soul that are reached in nature that just aren’t reached by a standardized quiet time. But then again, this is coming from a guy who basically came to know God in a tree stand with natural revelation all around me and special revelation in my lap. You do have to be careful not to use creation as an escape from Christian duty.

Special revelation is where we turn now as we read verses 7-10. **Special revelation** is the revelation of God’s Word. And as much as we enjoy natural revelation, we cannot know God personally or be saved apart from special revelation. The skies can speak but they can’t tell the whole story. The skies can tell of His glory but only the Scriptures can tell of His grace. That’s why you’ll notice David moves from calling God “El” (God) in v. 1 to calling Him “Yahweh” (LORD) in v. 17. It’s the personal, covenant name for God.

## II. PRAISE FOR GOD SPEAKING THROUGH HIS WORD. (VV. 7-14)

*The law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul;  
The testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple.  
8 The precepts of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart;  
The commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes.  
9 The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever;*

*The judgments of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether.  
10 They are more desirable than gold, even more than much fine gold;  
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.*

So a lot of times the comment is made, why doesn't God speak to us? And I'm often reminded of this cartoon where a man is saying to God, "Lord, speak to me!" and a giant hand comes out of the clouds handing him a Bible. It's so comical, but true! God has spoken in nature and even more clearly in Scripture. In fact, He's spoken so much that people, even Christians, are intimidated by how much He has spoken. David praises Yahweh here for His **Word**, the Law, the Torah, which is what David had in his day. Even just the first 5 books of the Bible are worth rejoicing over because they give us fundamental, life-giving, and life-ordering truths and principles that we need to know God and who we are in relation to Him.

The context amplifies the text again: in contrast to the pagan, polytheistic, and confusing religions of the Ancient Near East where there was always lack of assurance about what the god demanded, David praised Yahweh for clear instruction in His Word. In contrast to the immoral gods of the nations, Yahweh's words are sure, right, pure, true, and enduring—just like Yahweh. How assuring that God had spoken clearly in His Word! No more wondering about how to appease all these cruel, immoral gods. Yahweh's Word is sweeter than **honey** and more valuable than **gold**.

### **We worship through the Word.**

We can't underestimate the importance of music in worship—how much less God's Word! God's Word is where we learn how to worship acceptably. We worship God as we read, hear and apply God's Word. We get to know Him personally through His Word. We learn the gospel through His Word. It transforms us into true worshippers. As you sit here this morning and take in the Word of God, you are worshipping. You're giving yourself to God through worship. In a world of deceit and despair, you are worshipping in the Spirit and in truth. This brings up another way of worship that we don't often think about:

### **We worship through intellect.**

With our mind. Our thoughts and reflection. Our meditation on His Word (v. 14). We are to worship (*abad*; serve) the Lord with all our heart, soul, *mind*, and strength. We are to set our mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8). We're to take every thought captive (2 Cor. 10:5). David prayed that his words and *thoughts* would be pleasing to God. Someone once said "*Christianity is the thinking man's religion.*" There's an old Jewish saying that "*study is the highest form of worship.*"<sup>7</sup> Some people, I would say, worship with their intellect more than others. They tend to listen to sermons more than music and just can't read enough systematic theology or discussion of it. They feel closer to God when they learn something new and can articulate that to others. They *like* the big theological words. They're deep, careful thinkers. I'm thankful for the individuals with strong, scholarly intellects who write preach and teach, write books, commentaries and systematics. They're gifts to the Church. They greatly enhance our understanding of the Scriptures and the things of God because they put a lot of thought into it. The great thinker and author A. W. Tozer,

who wrote a book called *Knowledge of the Holy* and, always writing with such originality, says, “God tells us to make a sanctuary of our thoughts in which He can dwell. He treasures our pure and loving thoughts, our meek and charitable and kindly thoughts. These are the thoughts like His own. As God dwells in your thoughts, you will be worshipping, and God will be accepting. He will be smelling the incense of your high intention even when the cares of life are intense and activity is all around you.”<sup>8</sup> That’s good stuff. But let’s read the last portion of Psalm 19 now.

### III. PRAYER OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD. (VV. 11-14)

*Moreover, by them Your slave is warned;  
In keeping them there is great reward.  
12 Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.  
13 Also keep back Your slave from presumptuous sins;  
Let them not rule over me;  
Then I will be blameless,  
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.  
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
Be acceptable in Your sight,  
O Yahweh, my rock and my Redeemer.*

So think about what just happened here: David looks up at the sky and says, “Wow! *The glory of God!*” He looks down at the Word and says, “Wow! *The grace of God!*” Then he looks within and says, “Bleh.”<sup>9</sup> “*The sky is bright with light. The Word is clean. I... am dirty. I’m a sinner. I fall so short.*” But that’s exactly what truth is designed to do! It’s to move us into understanding of who we are when we understand who He is. It moves us repentance and a closer worship-walk with God. Look how David longs to obey God. He knows that we aren’t worshipping if we aren’t truly obeying.

David asks God to reveal **hidden faults**—to bring sins to his attention that he is not even aware of—so that they won’t **rule over him**. You get the sense that David has done life *his way* before, and that life is like a dumpster fire. He also knows the **reward** of doing life God’s way and sees God **warning** him not to go back to doing things his way. See, the world won’t tell us the truth about decisions it tells us to make in life. It’ll try to butter you up and make you feel good about living for you. It’s really good at selling sin, as if it’s all fun and games and pleasurable. It doesn’t tell you, however, about the destruction it will bring to your life—the addiction and broken relationships and emptiness. So God’s Word brings **warning** (v. 11), saying, “*I wouldn’t do that if I were you.*”<sup>10</sup> It brings restoration and **reward** when we obey it—even everlasting reward through Jesus Christ, our **Rock and Redeemer**. So that’s the last point:

#### **We worship through obedience.**

We aren’t to know God just with our lips, but with our obedience (Rom. 2:23). If we only know God with our lips and not obedience, we’re taking His name in vain, and not truly worshipping.

We are to yield and offer our lives as living sacrifices, the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13; 12:1-2). Tozer wrote, “*Worship must be total. It must involve the whole you. That is why you must prepare to worship God, and that preparation is not always pleasant. There may be revolutionary changes which must take place in your life. If there is to be true and blessed worship, something in your life must be destroyed, eliminated. The gospel of Jesus Christ is certainly positive and constructive. But it must be destructive in some areas, dealing with and destroying certain elements that cannot remain in a life pleasing to God... How can we hope to worship God acceptably when these evil elements remain in our natures undisciplined, uncorrected, unpurged, unpurified?*”<sup>11</sup>

That’s good stuff. We worship when we obey: giving, praying, serving others, sharing the gospel, answering His call. Some folks, by the way, are recharged when they serve practically—when they’re the hands and feet of Jesus to other, making a difference in the name of Christ or answering His call to serve. Sometimes it’s as simple as being who He made you to be. I can’t help but think of the famous sprinter Eric Liddell’s who said, “*I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.*”

In summary, I challenge you to think about your worship temperament. I must be honest that I find in me all of these but some more than others, and I think it can be extremely helpful to have that awareness. If you don’t know where to start, you might ask yourself, “*Where do I go when to connect with God? Is it to nature and Scripture? Singing? Serving?*” I find it interesting that when Judas, seeking to betray Jesus, returned to the Upper Room and found it empty. But he knew exactly where to find Jesus. It was a place Jesus visited often to connect with the Father while in Jerusalem. The garden of Gethsemane. Where is your Gethsemane? Reconnect with Him there.

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<sup>1</sup> David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 9, defines worship as, “a comprehensive category describing the Christian’s total existence. It is coextensive with the faith-response wherever and whenever that response is elicited.... Worship theology expresses the dimensions of a life orientation or total relationship with the true and living God.”

<sup>2</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Willem A. VanGemeren, Erika Moore, “The Context of Worship in the Psalter,” in *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory* (ed. Benjamin K. Forrest, Walter C. Kaiser, Vernon M. Whaley; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 157.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 156-157.

<sup>4</sup> Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in the *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (ed. John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck; Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 807-8.

<sup>5</sup> Eugene Merrill, “Sacred Places, Acts, Times, and People in the Worship of Yahweh,” in *Biblical Worship: Theology for God’s Glory* (ed. Benjamin K. Forrest, Walter C. Kaiser, Vernon M. Whaley; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2021), 125.

<sup>6</sup> John Bates, quoted in Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*. (2 vols; 2d ed. condensed by David Otis Fuller; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1915), 1:86.

<sup>7</sup> Lois Tverberg, Ann Spangler, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus: How the Jewishness of Jesus Can Transform Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 30.

<sup>8</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Reason We Were Created—collected insights from A. W. Tozer* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2017), 119.

<sup>9</sup> Skip Heitzig, *Psalm 19—Say Something*, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zphSnIS4Zg4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zphSnIS4Zg4)

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Tozer, *Worship*, 117-118.