

The Footprints of God

The Song, Part 4

Psalm 19:1-6

President Theodore Roosevelt served our country in the early 1900's. Among other passions, he loved the outdoors. He was responsible for the creation of several national parks and monuments.

He was also a believer. In his first inaugural address, he said without apology, "I reverently invoke for my guidance the direction and favor of Almighty God."

When Roosevelt served in the White House, he often of course entertained guests from around the world. He was fond of taking them out to the back lawn at the end of the day and he would just begin to gaze up at the night sky. As the president stood gazing at the night sky, all of his guests would eventually stand there as well looking at the starry heavens. In his day, the vast array of stars was not dimmed by the city lights, and the magnificent display of God's brilliant creation would overwhelm the party. After several minutes, President Roosevelt would smile and say, "Well then, I believe we are small enough now. Let's retire for the evening and go to bed."ⁱ

For the evolutionist, the universe is not only mysterious and vast – which it is for us – it is also somewhat frightening and depressing. It doesn't help them sleep at night. In fact, it keeps them up at night.

Carl Sagan, the popular television host who taught a generation that the cosmos was all there was and all there ever would be, wrote before he died, "Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves."ⁱⁱ

But the believer has a different perspective doesn't he?

The answer to the question, "Are we alone in the universe?" is a resounding no.

The Creator has become our redeemer and our Shepherd!

Where Carl Sagan was tragically wrong was when he claimed that there was not even a hint that help would come to save us from ourselves.

The truth is we've been given more than a hint.

One old Puritan wrote centuries ago, "God has actually left large footprints throughout the universe."

When Paul arrived at Athens he preached to the leading citizens and declared unapologetically, "God made the world and all things in it."

The word he chose for "the world" was brilliant. He used the word cosmos. It was the choice of words by Homer, the ancient hero of Athens who used the word to describe the order of Athenian government.

Another favorite Athenian citizen was Plato, who used the word cosmos to refer to the order and precision in which a woman put on her makeup . . . first this layer, then that layer, then . . . that's as far as I'm gonna go with this illustration.

The word, cosmetics comes from cosmos.

The footprints of our Creator throughout the cosmos reveal order and beauty and precision.

And David begins, by the Spirit's direction, to compose what many consider the most brilliant expression in all his Psalms about the self-revealing glory of God.

You'll find it marked, Psalm 19.

James Montgomery Boice, in his commentary on this Psalm, wrote perceptively that God has revealed Himself in two Books – he called them; a big book, and a little book.

The big book is the universe – creation – around us.

We call that general revelation. General – because it’s available to everyone. It enables us to marvel at a Creator and a Designer.

Then there’s special revelation – which is the little Book – the book in your lap – the revelation of scripture. And the Bible fills in the blanks.

The universe reveals the power of God. The Bible reveals the purposes of God.

Creation shows us what God did. The Bible tells us why God did it.

Between the staggering discoveries of creation, and the exposition of scripture, we have much more than a hint that someone will be able to come from outside ourselves and save us.

Listen, there’s no need to wonder if you’re alone in the universe. In fact, there’s no need to wonder if you’re alone in your life today.

David says, “Let me show you . . . let me show you . . . God is speaking His grace and His glory and His care and His love to you every single moment of every single day.”

What I want to do in our session today is make five observations from this text that tell us what God is actually communicating to the human race through creation.

1. Creation reveals the signature of God (v. 1)

Notice *verse 1. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the [firmament or the] sky above proclaims His handiwork.*

The Hebrew verbs to *declare* and to *proclaim* can be understood as continuous. You could translate this, “The heavens keep on declaring the glory of God and the sky keeps on proclaiming His handiwork.”ⁱⁱⁱ

His Handiwork is another way of saying this is God’s signature. Like an artist, God has signed his masterpiece. And his art collection is on continuous display.

Like Picasso, who used to roll his thumb in the paint and then roll it on the canvass as his signature,

God’s signature has been rolled all over the portrait of creation.

Eugene Petersen, in *The Message*, paraphrases this opening line wonderfully to read;

*God’s glory is on tour in the skies,
God-craft on exhibit across the horizon.*

The heavens declare the glory of God.

David personifies creation and he effectively says, the sun isn’t just smiling, it speaks; the stars do more than twinkle, they talk – and one theme engages their tongues – they are telling us about the glory of our Creator God.^{iv}

Can you imagine someone hiking near Mt. Rushmore, going around a bend and coming face to face with a sight that stops them in their tracks; in front of them are four giant faces carved into stone.

Each head is as tall as a six-story building. Each man’s nose is twenty feet long. And you thought you had problems. Each mouth is eighteen feet wide.

In order for the crevices and curves to be shaped into their faces, more than eight hundred million pounds of stone were removed by precise blasting. The carvings are scaled to individuals who would be 465 feet tall.^v

Can you imagine the sculptor, John Borglum standing nearby, just having finished 14 years of hard work?

And he watches as the tour busses pull up and people get out and ooh and aah and take pictures and stand in amazement and then, can you imagine his surprise as some begin to postulate how long it would have taken the forces of nature to carve those faces.

Imagining how many random accidents must have occurred over millions of years to create such harmony and symmetry and form and beauty; and then, to his utter amazement, people begin giving Mt. Rushmore attributes of self-designing ability and then, just before he faints, he hears them begin to give the mountain praise and glory.

Beloved, we marvel and wonder at the universe . . . but we worship God.

Sir Isaac Newton, once the most revered scientist of his generation wrote, and I quote, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world – in other words, the world didn’t design itself – He

governs as Lord over the world; and on account of his dominion we call him Lord God.^{vi}

David makes it clear here in *Psalm 19 verse 1* that the universe, truly understood doesn't lead us to give it glory, but to give Him glory.

For creation reveals the signature of God.

2. Secondly, Creation reveals the wisdom of God

Notice verse 2. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

The word David uses for *pouring out speech* is the word for a bubbling spring.

It just keeps on bubbling up more and more. It's the same word used by Solomon when he writes, "*The fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook (Proverbs 18:4).*"^{vii}

In other words, *day to day*, literally, day after day, the brilliant wisdom of God just keeps bubbling up all over creation.

Don't ever wonder if God is speaking of His glory and His wisdom to you . . . just take a look around . . . look up. It's bubbling all around you.

This universe is a big book . . . and best of all it's a book with pictures.

I love pictures, don't you? How come when we get old, our books stop including pictures? What's with that?

I remember my Bible when I was a kid – it had all those classic paintings in it . . . man, I loved to stare and imagine and enter into those biblical scenes as a kid.

If the preacher was boring I'd just look at those pictures – which meant I wore those pictures out.

The Big book all around us is full of pictures.

David writes further here that *night after night*, even, it's a brand new photo album . . . in other words, even in the nighttime portraits you just can't turn off the bubbling fountain of knowledge.

By the way, the word David uses here for *knowledge* can be understood to mean, observable data, or facts.^{viii}

The observable data of creation is constantly bubbling up knowledge.

So where would you like to look?

Study the human body – it's amazing. At my age it's not so amazing, but you get the picture; study the petals of a flower, a blade of grass, the universe of life in a droplet of water, the beauty of a snowflake, the precision of an atom, the nature of gravitation,

the nature of light, the seasons; every observable part of nature testifies to an knowledgeable Creator.^{ix}

But of course, this very *knowledge* is suppressed by an unbelieving world, Paul wrote, "*who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth*" of creation (*Romans 1:18-20*).

Even when discoveries point to an original designer, the academic world scrambles for an explanation.

In fact, for decades – well into the 20th century – science textbooks taught the steady state theory – a theory which held that the universe had no beginning and was effectively eternal.

But in our lifetime, that theory has been totally overthrown with the now popular big-bang theory; this theory postulates that the universe exploded into existence some 20 billion years ago.

At least they got part of it right.

The steady state theory began to crumble 1913 when an astronomer discovered that a dozen galaxies relatively close to the earth were actually moving away from the earth at high speeds – about 2 million miles an hour – you'll never do that on Penny Road.

The discovery led to the implication then, obviously, that something happened here – originally – it started with us. Then along came Edwin Hubble who postulated even more clearly the beginning – which must have been a gigantic fireball explosion. Of course, you still have to have something to explode . . . but at least we're getting closer.

God spoke and . . . boom . . . the worlds came into existence.

The academic community also exploded with disagreement. That just can't be. So in the 1930's, Sir Arthur Eddington, a respected British astronomer wrote, "The notion of a beginning is repugnant to me."

A world renowned German chemist said, "To deny the infinite duration of time would be to betray the very foundations of science."

Phillip Morrison of MIT said, "I would like to reject it."

Albert Einstein even said, "The circumstance of an initial moment of creation irritates me."^x

The Apostle Paul *said* it would.

The knowledge of creation is suppressed (*Romans 1:18*).

It still must all be some kind of accident.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “If the solar system was brought about by accident, then the appearance of life on this planet was also an accident, and the whole evolution of man was an accident too. If so, then all our present thoughts are accidents – the accidental by-product of the movement of atoms. But if all our thoughts then are accidental by-products, why should we believe them to be true? I see no reason for believing that one accident should be able to [explain] all the other accidents.”^{xi}

Listen, here’s the tragedy of suppressing the amazing, stupendous observable data of this universe which reflects the glory of God – we miss the point.

Instead of worshipping, we end up worrying.

One author, now with the Lord, wrote, we have more knowledge about our universe than ever before but far less ability to live happily in it – because we are ignoring the Creator and His purpose for our lives – like creation – to bring Him glory.^{xii}

Creation reveals the signature of God . . . the knowledge and wisdom of God;

3. Third, Creation reveals the grace of God (v. 3)

Notice verse 3. There is no speech, nor are there words, where their voice is not heard.

Now at this point, my translation of this phrase would agree with the King James Version, in fact, going all the way back to the old Wycliffe Bible translation.

The problem with this phrase is that so much has to be supplied by the translator. The text simply, literally reads, “No speech, no words, not heard their voice.”^{xiii}

Some translate it to effectively read, the planets have no speech or words, and their voice isn’t heard.

In a way, that would be correct simply because planets don’t use our vocabulary and they don’t deliver literal speeches that we can understand.

However, consistent with the context of this verse, David is actually saying they *are* heard.

You could translate it – there is no speech and there are no words, where their voice is not heard. In fact, just look at the next verse – **verse 4 – their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**

That’s the idea.

In other words, there actually *is* a language of creation. And David is saying here that no matter

where you go on planet earth – no matter what language people are speaking – there is this universal voice of creation.

One British author wrote 80 years ago; These celestial missionaries have borne their message to everyone. Sun, moon, and stars are God’s traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey, confirming those who regard the Lord; condemning those who [deny Him].^{xiv}

But even when mankind denies the Creator and gives self-creating attributes to nature, God in His grace writes another sunrise in the sky.

Listen, do you think if you were God you would allow a blasphemer to enjoy a sunset? If you were the sculptor of Mt. Rushmore, would you stand quietly by while people imagined how much rain was needed to carve out the face of George Washington? No . . . you wouldn’t allow those people into the park. You’d put a sign up that read, “Unbelievers not allowed.”

But the grace of God delivers the marvels of His creation to the entire world, even when millions speculate how long it took for the accident to evolve into beautiful, precise form.

Creation reveals the grace of God.

4. Fourthly, creation reveals the imagination of God.

Listen, David could have never known what we have only learned in recent years about the depths and heights of the creative imagination of our Creator God.

The word God’s Spirit influenced David to use for **voice** – in **verse 4 – their voice goes out through all the earth** – is a fascinating word that has more meaning for us today than David could have ever dreamed.

It’s the Hebrew word that can be translated **chord** – a literal musical chord; so that a musician plays a string in the chord or key, say of C major, or E minor.

It’s interesting that in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Greek word that’s used here in Psalm 19:4 is the word that refers specifically to a musical sound.^{xv}

In other words, David is saying, “The universe is singing – and the music of the universe is heard throughout all the earth . . .”

Certainly, David could hear a lot of musical tones or sounds . . . but we know today there are millions more.

David couldn't have dreamed that one day there would be the field and science of bioacoustics. A field of science that has revealed we are literally surrounded by millions of ultrasonic songs.

The smallest plants are emitting tones; massive planets are humming with musical notes. Listen to this: the electron shell of the carbon atom produces the same musical scale as a Gregorian chant; a single hydrogen atom emits 100 frequencies – it is more musical than a piano which only has 88 frequencies; the undulations of light waves make music; even earthworms are beating out percussion sounds; meadowlarks have a musical range of 37 octaves; the ordinary flies hanging over meadows are buzzing in harmony. If we could hear it with our ears, the combined sound would lift us off our feet.^{xvi}

I believe we will one day be given the opportunity by God in our glorified bodies and in the new heavens and earth to hear the harmony of God's creation; to hear the planetary tones; to hear the chords created by distant stars – literally the symphony of God's created universe.

Creation reveals the imagination of our composer Creator.

5. One more observation: creation reveals the joy of God.

Notice verse 5. In them (that is, in the planets and stars of the universe) God has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, 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 there is nothing hidden from its heat.

David personifies the joy of the sun to equal that of a bridegroom coming out of his house to go marry his bride.

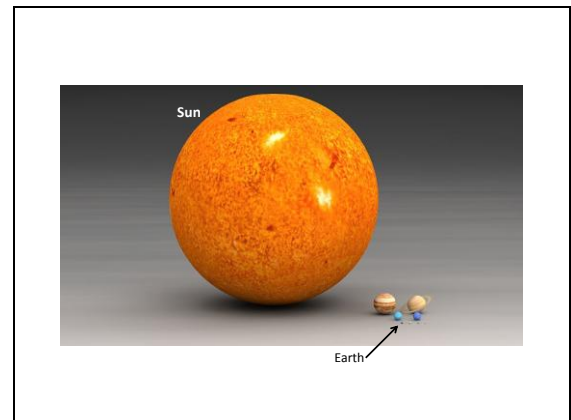
I mean, how joyful can that be?

- Men, that was the happiest day of your life, amen? (this section was with me . . . this section over here is sleeping on the couch)
- Men, that was the happiest day of your life, amen?

David says, "The sun can't wait to begin the day – each day is the happiest day of his life . . . to race across the sky with joy!"

Obviously, without telescopes and aids for vision, David is most impressed with the sun. It is impressive. It is fearful and amazing too.

I actually brought along a picture to show you – not because you're bored with the preacher, but because you love pictures.



Here's the sun – in perspective – the size of a bowling ball – and there's planet earth, about the size of a BB.

If the sun were hollow, it would take more than a million planet earths to fill the sun up.^{xviii}

Again, we know so much more of what the sun does than David would have known.

Let me read from Henry Morris who wrote, The sun's radiant energy, emanating from its surface is the result of still unknown reactions in its depths. But a part of that energy reaches the earth, where it is converted through various processes into the chemical energy of our biosphere; the electrical and kinetic energies of our atmosphere, the hydraulic energy of our rain and rivers and all the other energy resources on which the earth depends.

And it's just the right distance away.

Here's the point David is making; the sun is eager to serve its Creator with joy – obviously reflecting the joy of God who created it for His glory and our good.

I mean, wouldn't it be great if we served God in the same joyful manner?!

If we got out of bed tomorrow morning with the sense that God has created us to run our race with joy – just as Jesus Christ, the Son of Glory ran; who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross – He's

running with joy . . . even in the midst of suffering.
Why? He's running to win His Bride.

Creation reveals:

- The glory of God
- The wisdom of God
- The grace of God
- The imagination of God
- The joy of God

Don't ever wonder if God's speaking of His power and glory and imagination and grace and wisdom and joy . . . just look up . . . and look around.

Just remember, what you do see . . . what you do know . . . is a message directly from God to you. And because you're a believer, you can get the point. It's a message of His power, His glory, His

love, His care, His provision, His wisdom, His imagination . . . and His joy over you.

Just imagine what's ahead for us all, in the new heavens and the new earth.

A woman by the name of Clara Null was outside one lovely evening with her elementary aged granddaughter . . . they were going for a walk. The stars, Clara writes, were brilliant and magnificent. I named some of individual stars for her and even pointed out some constellations – we paused in awe of the sight above our heads.

Suddenly my granddaughter said, "Grandma, if the bottom side of heaven is this beautiful, just think how beautiful the other side must be."

Which is another way of saying, "We haven't seen anything yet!"

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/26/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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i E-mail from the Presidential Prayer Team (6-21-02); submitted by Larry Trotter

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iii Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 5, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Zondervan, 1991), p. 179

iv W.B. Riley, The Bible of the Expositor and the Evangelist: Volume 9 (Union Gospel Press, 1929), p. 143

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vi Sir Isaac Newton. "Women in the Medieval Church," *Christian History*, no. 30.

vii Expositor's, p. 181

viii G.A.F. Knight, Psalms: Volume 1 (Westminster Press, 1982), p. 95

ix John MacArthur, p. 114

x MacArthur, p. 164

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xii Adapted from Harold W. Fife, Melody in the Heart: Echoes of Praise from the Psalms, (Moody Press, 1972), p. 30.

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xv H.D.M. Spence & Joseph S. Exell, editors; The Pulpit Commentary: Psalms: Volume 1 (Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), p. 129

xvi Adapted from Mark Batterson, All In (Zondervan, 2013), p. 118

xvii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Planets_and_sun_size_comparison.jpg

xviii MacArthur, p. 108