

Psalm 19:1  
“The Word of God”  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday af. Epiphany

January 24, 2016  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

**[Introduction]**

A missionary in India was at the Ganges River one morning, when he noticed, on the bank of the river, a mother with a beautiful new baby, as well as a severely mentally impaired child about age 3.

At the end of the day the missionary returned,  
and saw the mother and the three-year-old still there, but the baby was gone;  
the mother was trying to console her three-year-old.

The missionary went and asked her about the baby,  
and with tears streaming down her face the mother looked up and said,

***“I don’t know about the god in your country,  
but the god in mine demands the best.”***

She had given her beautiful new baby to the god of the Ganges River.

You know, all people are religious by nature.  
They’ve worshiped everything from trees to brass monkeys to rocks to emperors.  
They’ve sacrificed too –  
everything from chickens to human beings,  
just trying to make their gods happy.

So I’m not all that impressed when I get an email “proving” God’s existence.

Oh, I enjoy such emails; many of them are clever.  
But for the vast majority of people, who already believe in a “god” of some form,  
such proof is ineffective.

The few who claim to be atheists, who believe there is no god,  
won’t be convinced no matter what proof you offer.

Martin Luther once said that, if anyone denies the existence of God,  
he ***“should be referred to a physician  
who should clean out his brain for him.”***

[*Proof of Existence*]

***“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands,”***  
says the first verse of Psalm 19.

Once, a Russian communist threatened a Christian,

***“The time will come when we will destroy all churches,  
burn all Bibles and kill all pastors.”***

The Christian replied, ***“The stars will remain, and they will declare the glory of God.”***

In fact, all of creation, every tree and blade of grass, shouts forth not only the existence of God, but also the glory of God.

*Creative gives proof to God. And so does everyone’s conscience.* [transition]

Our conscience tells us that there is a right and a wrong;  
and if there’s a right and a wrong,

then there must be Someone who set up the standards for right and wrong,  
and that Someone is God.

Yes, God reveals himself through creation and conscience.

But here’s where the fun ends because neither the stars and creation,  
nor our conscience, can give us the information that we need about God.

What can the stars tell us?

They can tell us that God is out there,

that He’s very wise and powerful,  
and that He’s been very busy

making sure that everything’s hanging together in this universe.

And our conscience, and God’s law written in our hearts,

can tell us that God has certain standards,  
and also that we fail to live up to God’s standards.

But again, the *exact details* are fuzzy.

So fuzzy, in fact, that the Bible says that, by nature, people are ***“without God and without hope in the world”*** (Ephesians 2:12).

If all you have to go by are a person’s outward actions, you probably don’t know very much about the person. You can guess what motivates the person, but you’ll never know for sure unless – unless the person speaks and honestly tells you what’s in his or her heart.

And if all we had to go by were God's created universe, beautiful and complex as it is, and our own sense of right and wrong, which God put into us in a general way, we would still be left guessing about who God really is and what He really wants and how to relate to Him.

This is, really, what most Americans have done.

The basic beliefs of most "religious" people in this nation are that God is loving – so loving, in fact, that He's kind of a pushover – and that He is on the side of truth and justice, but He's not so much concerned about a set of rules. As long as you try to be a decent person and don't judge others or put them down, He will accept you and help you. And when you die you'll join your loved ones in heaven, no matter what you or they believed about Him.

*We're here this morning, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,* worshiping God, because we know that we have more information about God than that.

We have more information than the stars can provide,  
more information than our conscience can provide,  
more information than the American pop culture can provide.

We have words from God Himself.

He doesn't keep us guessing; instead, He's given us a rather large book, written over a period of over 1500 years, by about 40 men, men who ***"spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"*** (2 Peter 1:21).

Without this book we could not know God.

Without this book we could not love God; if anyone claims to love God, without knowing what the Bible says about God, that person is deluded.

Without God's Word we couldn't even fully know what God wants from us. And we could never know the depth of our sin and just how badly we need Him. And certainly we could know nothing about any plans He has made to save us and give us eternal life.

*We're here this morning, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,* because we are aware that God's ultimate revelation of Himself came when He sent His Son into this world.

As the beginning verses of Hebrews state, ***“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe”*** (Hebrews 1:1-2).

*We’re here this morning, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,* because we know that God’s Son Jesus did not come just to give us information about God.

He came not just to tell us what God wants, but He came to do what God wants – to do it in our place, as our Substitute, because we could never do it ourselves.

And He came to suffer and die and pay for our inability to do it.

We’re here today because we know God’s Son Jesus did not come just to show us God’s salvation, but to be our salvation.

That’s something that no one can say, without God’s Word in the Bible, and without faith in God’s Son.

We admit that neither Jesus, nor the Biblical writers, revealed everything to us.

There’s so much more we’d like to know, and we long for the day when we will see Him face to face and undoubtedly so much more will be revealed.

In the meantime, we stick with what we have; we stick with what’s in this Book, and we thank God that He gave us as much as He did, and we are convinced it’s enough – enough for our eternal salvation, and enough to get us through this life.

*We’re here this morning, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church,*  
because we are thankful that our God has revealed Himself to us.

Think about that:

What’s the difference between you and the most ignorant heathen in the world?  
Why are they worshiping trees and rocks and Allah and throwing babies into the river, when you’re not?

Why are they aborting their babies and living immoral lives, when you’re not?

There’s only one reason: God has chosen you,  
and He has revealed Himself to you. Amen!

Now, let us sing a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen!