

I'm starting with praying v.14 – start with the end verse, it's a common verse that preachers use before they speak. I've just changed the words round a little bit.

Dear Father, These are the words that I have been chewing over and praying over this week. Accept them when I place them on your altar; may they be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer

This is the last week of our brief excursion in looking at 4 psalms in Book 1 of Psalms. We've been reminded that Psalms are prayers – both Jenny and Ash have reminded us

Now this psalm today is not a lament or a crying out to God psalm – you know with the question, Why? Why? Or as Jenny said, "Life sucks!!" No, this is a psalm which it's almost as if the psalmist is saying "Let's stop a minute. Yes, we CAN cry out to God; we CAN argue with God. But let's just consider for a minute, Who is this God? How has he revealed himself? How can we know him?"

This psalm is affirming the truths that are evident all around us

So the psalm is divided into three sections:

So here's a question. What is the most amazing thing you find in nature? As you look around us what stands out to you? If you're on Zoom type in your response; in the church building call out some answers

1. General revelation

– nature, specifically the heavens and how they display or declare God's glory. It's brilliant poetry – just hear those words again. Proclaiming; pour forth; reveal. It's like one of those clever riddles – eg "What cries out loudly but makes no noise?"

And the psalmist is only talking about the heavens; there's so much more he could include; all the stuff on earth – plants, animals, our human body. The psalmist draws our attention to 3 characteristics of this amazing world:

- a) It is continuous – "day after day...night after night" – there is no break; God is shouting out to us, "Look. Look. This couldn't have happened by chance." There is no intermission. Every moment of every day – if only we will hear
- b) It is abundant – it's not just one item or even a few items. The psalmist says it "pours" out v.2. Just think of it – the stars, the planets, the sun which he talks about in v.4-6, wind, rain, etc etc
- c) It is universal – although there is no speech or language (v.3) yet by sight rather than by sound their message penetrates to the end of the world. So everyone sees. I may not be able to communicate by language with you but we are both made with God's sense of delight at seeing the beauty and power of a sunrise and a sunset.

And then there's the focus on just one example in the heavens – the sun. Why the sun? It's probably the dominant feature in our natural experience. The sun comes up we have light; the sun goes down we have darkness. Before electricity you did all your work in the sunlight hours – difficult to work in the dark. The sun gives warmth; it gives energy to grow crops – the whole photosynthesis process. And in more recent years we've learnt how to harness the sun's energy – solar energy.

Again, the description of the sun is beautiful poetry. In v.4-6. It's dramatic imagery isn't it? The psalmist likens the sunrise to the emergence of a bridegroom from his bedroom on the day of

his marriage – very sensuous imagery. But a wonderful image of a man excited about who he has committed himself to in marriage. And then there's the long distance marathon – the athlete running and running. It's not a hard slog though – it's a celebration – the athlete is eager and enjoying the run. The bridegroom like the sun bursting into the morning sky and then the sun running across the sky to finish in a glorious sunset. And that's just the sun. But everything gets affected by the sun, doesn't it? We have light, warmth, crops grow, the sun even gives light to the moon.

Human beings cannot plead ignorance of God, since he never ceases to give a revelation of himself, which is called "general" because it is made to all people everywhere. In Romans chapter 1 the Apostle Paul put it, *What may be known about God is plain to them (ie everyone), because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what he has made, so that men are without excuse.* God has given us a testimony in the world he has created.

Hey, one last thing. Have you ever thought, if there was no night how would we know about the planets and our amazing universe. And the way our bodies are made, we need sleep. Imagine if it was light all the time. When would we sleep? Night time is the logical time to sleep, apart from those who work in hospitals, or who pack the shelves ready for the next day, or drive the Aldi trucks to fill up the stores.

Don't tell me this was all chance. There's no way this could just happen. And we've only started to scratch the surface in talking about all that God has created. God shouts out to us from creation.

2. Special revelation.

Ok, God says to us, I've made this amazing world – so much detail, so much intricate work. I calculated my heart has beaten 129,171,456,000 times so far in my life. That's calculated on the basis of 1 heart beat per second which is fairly average. (You can now work out how old I am) When I'm exercising this doubles. So, my heart has probably had more like 180 billion beats so far. And that's just my heart. What about all the other parts of my body the neurons, cells etc etc. And this is just one human body.

But God says I want relationship with you. I know that my creation screams out to you that I made this world, but I want relationship with you and I'm going to reveal more about myself. We call this special revelation. The Psalmist says God has shown us a special and supernatural revelation of himself. It's the law – now that doesn't just mean the 10 Commandments, it's broader than that. It means all of the Old Testament. **It's all that God wants us to know about himself.** Through the law, the history, the prophets, the psalms – all of it. So although David didn't know this, it would include all the revelation about God in the NT as well. All that God has revealed. There is no life for our souls without that knowing God. The heavens and the law both make God known.

What are you like at following directions? It's easy isn't it. You buy some shelving from IKEA. You pull out the pieces of wood, the screws all the parts and you start building. But if you're like me the instructions lie on the floor. And then when you get stuck you finally look at the instructions. Oh Yes!

Now I know you're saying, What an idiot you are Dave. But this is what David is telling us in v. 7-11. David wants us to know how special God's word is. He uses different words to describe

it. Lets' look at these briefly. Look at the first description – the law of the Lord. Ummm. Straight away I think, “law”. Laws constrict me. And we think about the Pharisees keeping the letter of the law. Jesus didn't speak highly of them. But look what David says – this law is perfect, and what does it do? It revives the soul. It brings life to the soul. Remember this word means all that God has revealed about himself. He made us and he gives us rules and signposts so that we will have true joy as we live our lives. What dummies we are if we live without following the directions of the maker. I love the way The Message has paraphrased these verses

I think I'm realising more and more as I get older that God has made us in such a way that when we are truly seeking after him, sitting at his feet, pursuing relationship with God then we will find God's total revelation, his laws and his will to be “more precious than gold, sweeter than honey, giving joy to the heart, and refreshing.” As with any relationship this involves time spent with each other.

3. Our Response –

David goes on in v. 11-14 to express the desire to be following God. As he spends time with God, and learns from God he desires that his life be blameless in v.13.

He is thankful in v. 11 that God's words in Scripture warn him and guide him and reveal his own life to him. He cries out to God to show him his sins; he doesn't want them to rule over him, in v.13. Having discovered what an amazing God he serves through God's general revelation and special revelation, David wants to honour God in his life. David is writing before Jesus has come; he looks forward to the time when someone will come who will deliver him from sin. If we've accepted that Jesus died for our sin and that he conquered death by rising again from the dead and we've repented then sin has been dealt with in our life. We have been made blameless through what Jesus did on the cross. We ARE a child of God; we ARE forgiven. We still do have our flesh which Satan appeals to – he says “Oh Dave it's not such a big thing. God loves you; he'll forgive you”. So he sometimes appears as an angel of light. And at other times he will accuse us: “Oh, Dave, you've failed again. How can God accept you?” Satan the accuser.

But in both instances we need to remember that if we have repented and follow Jesus as our Lord, then we are his child, we are in his family. Nothing can take that away. In God's eyes we are no longer sinners. But at the same time God urges us on to live as his people. He knows we're going to fail, to bomb out, until the day we die. But nothing can change the fact that we are his child. What does David say in v.14? He finishes with the words Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Not, Lord , my accuser. No he recognises that God is the one who redeems him, who saves him. What we find throughout the New Testament is Paul and the other writers urging us on to live as God's people. For example, on Friday night a group of us were reading Ephesians 3. And it says there: *I pray that out of his glorious riches he(that is, God the Father) may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.* We have the Holy Spirit in our lives to direct us, to strengthen us to live as his people. And then, Paul continues, *With God's power working in us, he can do much, much more than anything we can ask or think of.* And then a few verses on in chap 4 of Ephesians Paul urges his brothers and sisters, *I beg you to live the way God's people should live, because he chose you to be his.* He doesn't say live as God's people because if you don't you're no longer God's child or you may not be accepted by God. No,no. Live this way because you ARE his chosen child. And then Paul goes on to list some of the things that

should mark our lives – *Always be humble and gentle. Be patient and accept each other with love.* And so it goes on.

It seems to me that the key is to continue to immerse ourselves in God's word. Keep reading it and meditating on it. Pray that God would refresh us through it; and give us joy in it. That the Holy Spirit would strengthen this message in us and prepare us for life as his people.

As I said earlier, if we're NOT praying for, desiring, pursuing relationship with God we're going to be sucked in by what seems to be better and the things that say to us that they will satisfy us more. All around us - I know because it happens to me, I get sucked in, I take my eyes off what is truly most important and also truthful – all around us we are bombarded by the cries of the world – You need this; you will be happy if you get this; you deserve this. There are no ads crying out to us – Flee, flee, run to God – he's all you need. But that's the reality. And what does David tell us – when we take time to reflect on his amazing creation; when we learn and discover truths from his Word and when we run to God and cry out to him to show us our secret sins and listen to the warnings from God's word, then our souls WILL be revived; then we WILL become wise; then our eyes WILL be opened; then our hearts WILL rejoice. And we will find God to be our ROCK and our REDEEMER. Keep running to God

As I reflect on the situation of many in our church who are sick, have chronic pain, I am reminded that though we may not all have the physical capability of moving freely, of jumping and running physically we can certainly do this spiritually.

The example of my Mum and Georgina's Mum – Barb with chronic arthritis, but sitting up in bed praying, a big smile across her face; Camille was a humble caring woman. She was a very capable woman. She only went to 9th grade at school. When she went to Borneo with my Dad she was the one who learnt Hakka, a Chinese dialect, so she could connect with many of the women who had been converted. They used to say she could speak Hakka just as if she had been born a Chinese. Back in Australia when my parents returned Dad taught at a school which had a lot of boarders. I was a day boy so every day I would go to my house which was on the school property and Mum would have lunch ready and would sit with me and my brothers. She invested her life in ours. Then in the last 2 years of her life she got cancer and fought with that with chemotherapy. The cancer returned and she was dying. I remember sitting with her in the last 4 weeks of her life, and people would come to comfort her. She had been a good friend to them. But I was amazed how often she would be the one doing the comforting, praying for them, encouraging them to go on in their faith. That's how she spent the last few weeks of her life on earth.

Did they die too young? No, God took them home when the time was right.

They were women who had learnt the truth that the heavens declare that God is the ruler, the maker of this world; that his law, his statutes, his revelation of himself satisfied them, gives them joy and they delighted in knowing God and following him.