

INTRODUCTION

We have had another week when the weather has been very poor here in the Dales and throughout many places in United Kingdom. But the poor weather has meant that we have seen some amazing sights. We have had some thunderstorms with amazing flashes of lightening across our sky. We have seen the amazing power and devastation caused by flooding and landslides.

In many ways we have seen something of the power of nature, as our television reporters want to call it. But the truth is that we have seen something of the greatness and majesty and power and glory of our God who controls all the elements. I hope during the thunderstorms you looked up into the sky and said wow! Isn't our God great and isn't he glorious.

As you watched the cars float down the street in Cornwall I hope your heart went out to those people in that little village but I also hope you raised your hearts and voices to God and said isn't our God powerful. You see nature shouts at us all the time and if only we had the ears to hear it we would discover nature saying, Look God exists, God is real, God is powerful and altogether glorious. This is the subject that the writer of this Psalm takes up at the beginning of the Psalm that we are looking at today. What this Psalm gives us is what the theological books call the doctrine of divine revelation. Most systematic theologies divide this doctrine of divine revelation into two categories.

These are general revelation, which refers to the revelation of God in nature and special revelation, which in this Psalm refers to God's revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture. This divide of revelation is exactly what we have in this Psalm. We have general revelation in verses 1-6 and special revelation in verses 7-11. Then there is a concluding section (vs. 12-14) in which the Psalmist applies this revelation to himself.

We are only going to have time to look at the first six verses today, which deal with God's general revelation. So let's look at God's revelation as it is seen in nature.

1. GENERAL REVELATION (vs. 1-6)

The Psalm begins by stating, "the heavens declare the glory of God" that "the skies proclaim the work of God" (v 1). Now the word 'heavens' is used in a number of ways in Scripture but it is clear from the context here that the Psalmist is thinking of the heavenly bodies. The stars, which are visible at night, and the sun which he introduces to us as a specific example in verses 4-6. His teaching is very clear here. The heavens, which contain these created objects, witness to the fact that there is a God. These heavenly bodies declare that they owe their existence to their creator God.

Not only do they declare that God is the creator, they also witness to the glory of this God. They give a clear declaration that God is altogether glorious. For if we examine the stars or the Sun we come to the conclusion that they are glorious (look at how David describes the sun in verses 4-6 in poetic language). Now if that is the case then the right conclusion to come to is that the God who made such glorious heavenly bodies must himself be glorious.

Now this revelation of God is clear but we also have to say that it is also limited. The sun and stars might witness to the fact that God is glorious but they cannot testify to God's moral qualities. In other words you cannot study the sun stars and moon and come to the conclusion that the God who created such things is just or merciful or loving or wrathful or good or gracious or compassionate.

General revelation has no moral element but it does clearly speak of our Creator and of his glory and it is sufficient to start us searching for this creator God, seeking to find out what sort of God He is.

Now this is exactly what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1. It might well be that Paul had this Psalm in mind as he writes this passage under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Look at Romans 1:20. What Paul says is exactly what this Psalm is saying.

That the revelation of God's existence and power is clearly seen in nature, in fact it is so clearly seen that it should lead every human being on the face of the earth to seek God and to thank him for bringing him into existence and to worship him. But if God's general revelation is seen so clearly why is it that we accredit the floods and the thunderstorms to Mother Nature rather than to God?

If the stars and heavenly bodies are so glorious then why do we, as human beings not come to the conclusion that God is glorious? Why do we not seek God and worship him? Why is evolution taught in our schools and accepted by so many people if the heavens clearly declare that God is our creator and he is glorious? Well Paul gives us the answer to those questions in Romans chapter 1. What Paul says is that every human being actually seeks to suppress the truth of God's general revelation either by denying God existence or by erecting a lesser god, an idol in our hearts in the place of the true God (Romans 1:18-23).

The result of this is that the wrath of God is being revealed against us and against our truth suppressing culture.

Now I think this shows us something of how corrupt our human nature really is. Even though, in our heart of hearts, we know by creation that there is a God who is glorious. We prefer to suppress that truth within us and instead either deny that clear truth or at least admit it but refuse to bow down to our creator God or acknowledge him in our lives and we do this by the creation of our own man made gods.

These gods today are money, power, influence, family, jobs, material possessions and a host of other things. Anything or anyone that takes the place of God in our hearts is a man made god. They are robbing the true God the one who created you of the worship due to him alone. Is it any wonder that we see the world in such a mess? God's wrath is being poured out day after day because we as human beings have suppressed the truth of God's clear general revelation. Even this past week no one gave the credit to God for what we have seen in nature.

We speak of nature as if it has its own mind and its own power and its own will to do as it pleases. How can we be rescued from such thinking, how can we get back to understanding nature as God's clear revelation to us which teaches us that He exists and is powerful and glorious.

The truth is that we are so corrupt, as human beings, that we can never acknowledge God's work in nature on our own. We need God's intervention in our lives to reveal to us his truth and to show us how corrupt we are and how wrathful God is towards us. God clearly shows us how this is possible in his Son Jesus Christ.

He came into our world as his special revelation in order that he might die for us so that we can be forgiven for our failure to acknowledge him and for our willingness to suppress the truth in our hearts. God alone can intervene in our lives so that we will turn to God in repentance and seek his forgiveness and begin to really acknowledge him and worship him as our creator God.

You will never do that on your own. If we could, Jesus would not have had to come and die to deal with our sin and to break the power of sin in our lives. So if you want to really acknowledge God as creator then you must first acknowledge your sin and acknowledge him as your Saviour. Only God can enable you to do that; so will you seek him?

Will you look up at the sky tonight and tell God that you know he exists and that you want to know him as your God and have him as your Saviour. Creation alone will not be sufficient to lead you to God but it will point you in the right direction. Then you need the second half of this Psalm to guide you that is you need God's special revelation the bible to show you what this creator God is like and what he thinks of you and how you can know him as your God.

So if you are convinced that there is a God through looking at nature do not stop there look for him and the place to start looking is in his written record in the bible itself.

But for those of us who are Christian, stop and look at nature and see just how powerful and how glorious your God really is. Use creation as a way to witness to people as a way to proclaim Christ as the answer to men's willingness to suppress what is so clear and so obvious.

Speak of nature to others as God's work let's not allow the world to give credit to Mother Nature instead of to God. Let us declare at every opportunity that God is the creator and controller of everything and it's to him that we must turn to and it's him alone that we must praise.

You know that situation in Cornwall was very ironic. Things that this world prizes highly like cars and homes and materialism were totally washed away by what? A little flood; all that we consider to be important is gone in a moment. We can do wonders as human beings we can walk in space we can invent great things we can cure many diseases but we are powerless to stop the rain and the rivers from overflowing.

Is God not clearly saying something, not just to people in Cornwall but to us all? Is he not saying look how powerless we really are look how unimportant materialism really is when disaster strikes. Is God not saying "Look how powerful I am, therefore turn to me seek me and find out for yourself just how great and glorious I am". Is he not saying to us as Christians look what I can do, therefore seek me first and seek my kingdom and everything else that is less important will be taken care of by me (Matthew 6:33).

Now let us get back to the Psalm and see three things about this general revelation in creation.

a) General Revelation is continuous (v 2) -

The Psalmist says that every day and every night nature speaks to us and tells us about God. In other words creation is not an intermittent revelation. God gave his word to us in the Old Testament through prophets but God allowed many silent years before he each prophet.

But general revelation is not like that. Every single night of the week and every week of every year the heavens declare the glory of God; they clearly speak to us and give us some knowledge about God. This is how it has been since creation and every generation of every country in the world have a clear testimony of God through the heavens speaking clearly to us.

Every day when you awake and look out the window the sky is shouting at you to look how glorious God is. Every night as we draw those curtains to go to bed the heavens declare to us that God is glorious. It is no wonder that Paul says in Romans 1 that we are without excuse. You know as Christians I think sometimes we become so wrapped up in our own little lives that we fail to listen to God through his general revelation to us.

We can take for granted the lovely scenery that we have here in the Dales. We can drive through the Dales so taken up with ourselves and our lives that we fail to even pause and thank God that he is glorious, that he is the maker of heaven and earth.

Let us everyday, this week, seek to ponder God's work in creation as we see it here in the Dales and as we witness it on our television screens. Let us praise God that he is glorious and let us tell others to look and see that our God is the creator and sustainer of life and he is glorious and powerful.

b) General Revelation speaks clearly (v 2) – Every individual part of nature speaks of its creator. So that whatever part we happen to be looking at will pour forth knowledge of our creator. It might be a beautiful butterfly or it might be a raging river or it might be a quiet valley surrounded by hills but each part speaks of the glorious nature of our creator God. Therefore we need to open our eyes and open our ears and listen to what nature declares to us about our creator.

Every flower, every bird, every river every mountain every human being is made in God's likeness and it all individually displays knowledge of God to us.

Because we live in a world which now has developed scientific methods for exploring our world we can find out things that we never knew before and this is another way that creation speaks to us about God. Remember the break through that was made when we discovered we all have DNA. And each one of us as human beings has a unique DNA just like our figure prints. Does our DNA not tell us that God is glorious?

We can explore space in a way we have not been able to do before. We can take a petal of a flower and look at it in detail under a microscope. We can study the life of an insect in detail and come to a better understanding of its ways and its habits.

Science is not the enemy of Christianity Science should be its friend for the more we explore this world and the more we know about creation then surely the more our world will speak to us about the glorious God who created all this. But because our human nature is so corrupt and because we suppress the truth many well meaning Scientist look at the evidence and because they refuse to believe that God created all this, they have to come up with some alternative view which, of course, leaves God as creator out of the equation.

But as Christians when we hear of some great scientific discovery, when we learn something new about some aspect of our created world, let us not fall into the trap of many Scientist who dismiss God. Let us instead praise our God for his wonderful creation for each new discovery tells us that our God is great, powerful and glorious. For the more we look into and investigate our world the more the heavens declare the glory of God.

c) General Revelation is Universal (vs. 3-4) – General revelation is not limited to a certain place. There are still nations in our world that do not have God's written word in their own language. There are still people who have not heard of Jesus Christ but there is no people who do not see the wonders of God's created work, there is no place on earth where you can go where the heavens do not declare the glory of God.

This is basis for the universal guilt attributed to man in Romans 1:20. Mankind is without excuse for their failure to seek God and turn to him. Even when people do not have God's special revelation in the Scriptures they have this general revelation that speaks to them of their creator God. They should follow up on it and seek this God but instead what does mankind do?

We suppress the truth and set up our own man made gods in place of the true living creator God. Therefore on that final judgement day no one will have any excuse for their failure to turn to God.

God will be perfectly just in punishing those who do not have his special revelation just as he will be just in punishing those who do have his word. Those who have God's special revelation sin against their greater light but all peoples on earth have no excuse we all have God's general revelation that reveals to us that God is our creator that he is glorious and that he ought to be sought after and trusted.

But what do we do as human beings. We suppress the truth and "exchange the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man" (Romans 1:23). No wonder we need to repent and turn to God. So heed his voice as he speaks to us today through his general revelation and through his special revelation. For we have been listening to his word today. We are not limited in our knowledge of God for he has revealed himself to us through creation and through his word.

So listen to him and if you do not know this God personally turn to him through Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian then praise God for his wonderful work of creation and let's go out this week and proclaim to the world that our God is glorious.

Amen