

## Psalm 19//Christ Church Liverpool// 9/1/11

Verse 8 "The precepts of the Lord are right giving joy to the heart". Precepts simply means the words of God, according to this writer recorded in the Bible. Not only true, but bring joy to life.

Going to make a frank confession to you if you are a guest – to be honest, that is not the experience of even most of the Christians in this church with the words that we have in the Bible..

Why is it that even we, who say that we shape everything by word we describe as living, why do we often not experience it the way that it describes how it should be experienced?

More fundamental question – what do you think is in here, this book?

One of many religious texts which describe different people's encounters with spirituality.

I have to say, not even interesting, never mind life changing. I can't be bothered reading some person's self indulgent "spiritual" babblings – to be honest go backpacking to Goa, see a few sunsets, take a few hallucinogenic drugs write one of those books. Particularly strong views about these things, think its interesting thing because its a religious text used to oppress people, but notion of enjoying such a tool of oppression is ridiculous

Map to explain the path of life. Now there are some people, I like to call them "geographers" who do find maps terribly interesting, slaver over them until small hours of the morning. Not most of us. In fact as an average man I try to avoid using a map as much as possible and insist I can find my way without one until I am very lost, not be found grasping my OS explorer 19 and telling the world how it brings joy to my heart.

Toll for that thing called a Bible study. Not thrilled at the prospect of study doesn't sound like this sweet as honey party described here. Language problem – there are people, I like to call them "academics" who do get very excited by such things, but in our house we prefer the telly.

Instruction manual. Life is a DVD player, Bible is the instructions how to use it. There are people, I like to call them "nerds" who do find a technical book gets them all joyful – but not a universal experience.

This chapter of the Bible is saying that because of what the Bible actually is and what it really can do any person can have this experience of its words.

### Star Wars Clip

According to Yoda, there is a force that holds the universe together – but only special people, Jedi's can access it by concentrating.

Bible says something more interesting, it is the way that we can , anyone, access the very force with which the whole universe is buzzing. We can, it says, through its' words, know that God.

### Knowing God: The sky (1-6)

Reading article recently about Facebook. Basically saying for people of my generation a useful to reconnect with people I was actually friends with in the real world.

Generation of people who ,make friends through Facebook. Socially stunting people who have been using it for years using Facebook instead of meeting people.

Author describes signing up at his loneliest point in the first week of university, having to log off when it read - welcome to Facebook you have 0 friends. Connected but defriended – 14 friends tagged in the album, the fun we had when Maurice wasn't there.

Can sort of know people only through Facebook, stalk them, but if that's the only relationship, looking at what they display publically, do you really know them?

God who made the universe has the most impressive Facebook page of anyone, place where his character is displayed for everyone to see totally publically, profile is constantly unavoidably logged on for the whole world.

Because the sky, Psalm 19 says, is pouring out every day to everyone in the world the message that God is amazing. That is his profile. Word Bible uses for that is glory – that is heavens display his greatness, his weight, his awesomeness. Day after day it pours forth this amazing display of his greatness to everyone in the world. Shows to everyone the work of his hands – what he has done which displays concretely what he's like, is set up there in the skies for everyone to see.

Gerard Manley Hopkins: THE world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

Wherever you are, access to the universe, it is buzzing with his energy. – pulsing with the awesome character of the God who made it: displaying how awesome that God is. In a world where lot of us have a very rational boring and actually unscientific view of creation – runs like clockwork, does what it does – blank, meaningless set of accidental physical laws interacting, Psalm 19 says no – sun rising every day is expression of limitless energy of the glorious, amazing God, heaven is his tent pitched for the display of his strength and happiness each morning as the sun rises.

Corridor, sun out, warmth, joy, energy comfort of it. Joyful display of creator God's unlimited glory. Beams of his beauty.

Occasionally I have met people who struggle with the idea of Christianity being true because the universe is so big, so massive that if there is a God who could not be interested in people like us. Milky Way Galaxy of which our solar system is part, sun is one star, is 100 000 light years in diameter and out sun one of 200 billion stars in it. Instruction manual people drooling. Too big, too grand, to awesome.

Sky is deliberately charged with God's grandeur, He is communicating something about himself, which is that he, force behind its creation, person who rejoices in keeping it going like a bridegroom wedding like an athlete running is glorious. Sky is his profile page. All of creation can look to see his power, his joy, amazing glory. Nothing is hidden from where the sun tears across the sky.

Like I said, being friends with someone on Facebook is not the same as being their friend in real life.

World where we are told that ourselves and the universe we live in are nothing but blank accidents, amazing joy to know there is a force.

Is it only there for display? Can you, Yoda's words, use the force? Practical use of this speech about God simply if you are ever in the unfortunate situation of your x wing sinking into a swamp?

I'm afraid this is where, although I am sad to say it, I need to part company with Yoda. I have a problem with the force. Only special people can use the force, Jedis, not special. Electricity which means you can't get to know it, use it to move stones and crashed space ships and the like. No personality.

God the Bible describes, real God is lots better than that. He is personal. When he came to our earth to show us what he was like definitively, that God whose infinite energy and creativity is splashed across the immensity of space, came to our earth as a person, Jesus Christ. He is not a force to be used, the great personal mind behind creation is talking to us so that we can know him. Why the writer of this Psalm moves on to talk about words.

### **Knowing God: The Words (7-11)**

It is basically impossible to have a relationship with a person without words. Extend kindness to someone enjoy their company without shared language. Sure that's true. Where people are really forming a relationship, people with a different language start finding out different words – way you say that is this. Frustrating, want to communicate but don't know that word. Friend who though she was saying be careful, saying bus stop.

Now the eagle eyed amongst you will have noticed that the name this guy uses for God changes in verse 7 – moves from God to the Lord. Interesting, because that is the name used throughout the Bible by people who know God personally – might want to say the name God uses to introduce himself to people. Resonance of the God who has promised things, God who has said things to us, shown himself.

Way you begin to know someone as you have their true words, using words express inner life: Bus stop to children not a valid representation of what my friend is really like, as she is able to say words that really represent her inner life, what's going on in her head form a friendship with this lady.

God who pours forth the mind blowingly awesome speech of the skies every day can be known by his name, in that relational personal way, because we have the words he is saying.

When you have someone's words have some connection with them: longing to feel connected to someone – 16 have a crush on that pretty girl or if you're a girl on the rugby captain. Say hi to you – "he spoke to me". I have his or her words – connection with this amazing person.

This writer is overjoyed, overwhelmed at how brilliant it is to have these words from the God who is both the awesome creator and totally personal. Last week about rejoice, enjoy knowing God – delight is clear – perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, sure, sweet, precious words.

As you know someone, have their words, you know the things that they say, it nearly always changes your behaviour. Pretty girl, rugby captain doesn't just say hi – but stops to speak to you. Words turn into an invitation, to the cinema, to hang out,. Down with the kids, invitation to add them as a Facebook friend. Changes the way you behave towards them, turned from a perfectly normal person into a moony dreamy adolescent who writes poetry and goes to see films you don't like or who starts watching rugby. Connection words give us with people change us.

How much more the words spoken by the personal force that spoke the very skies into being. How much will they, in verse 7, bring life to my dead hard dry inner person, connecting me with that power behind the universe. How much more will those words connecting me to that personality whose endless glory is painted in the sky make me wise to understand the world. If personal committed promises and words of that amazing girl or boy bring me joy, how much more the personal and committed promises of the God who yells his glory with the burning energy of the sun across the sky, committing by his words to me.

It really is more precious that gold to have these words – better than being rich.

Sweet tasty chocolate is a wonderful gift from the Lord, in our post Bridget Jones world, often a substitute for being loved by the person that you love. How much sweeter to have the loving personal words and promises of the God who made the world.

Something strange about this. Law, statutes, precepts of the Lord giving him this joy. Talking about books of the Bible we now have as Leviticus and Deuteronomy. If you are new to the Bible not the place I would recommend that you start. Secular reputation is that it is full of laws about birds nests and stoning foreigners that range from obscure to downright evil.

AJ Jacobs – written a book called a year of living Biblically. Obey as far as possible every command in the Old Testament – the famous ones about loving your neighbour, and then the more obscure ones – not trimming your beard, not wearing clothes of mixed fibres. He says that this was an attempt to see how much of religion is relevant in 21st century.

Book does not describe the life of joy that the Psalm writer talks of here. (Picture) Is this, Psalm 19 just biased

propaganda? Objective modern people look at the Bible, they discover it as the oppressive religious text we often thought.

Interesting that in the book, rather cynical attempt at self promotion book sales, not what he finds.

I think our writer would be confused by Jacob's approach. If you think about it, that is a strange way to react to words which are meant to help you get to know a person.

Let's go back to you and your pretty girl or your rugby captain on your first date. They are telling what you are interested in, what they care about, what they love. Ignoring that. Interrupt and say – yes but what is your command, and I will do it. Stop telling about yourself, I'll just do everything you say. Appearance of respect, deeply insulting – not interested in this person's revelation of themselves, what they are like.

So bored with the Bible, Christian or like AJ Jacobs, self describing as secular, think that's how it works. God is simply in heaven issuing commands, we should try our best to obey. Searching the Bible for the practical application, saying, yes yes, don't tell me about yourself, just tell me what I need to do to make you happy.

Like that first date I imagine, joyless experience. Ignoring the person, know is so awesome, endlessly doing things.

What does it actually feel like for me if I view the words of the Bible as the personal spoken words of the God who displays his personality in the glory of the skies?

### **Knowing God: The Experience (12-14)**

Eagle eyed will have noticed that verse 12 suddenly moves to talking about himself. Personal revelation of God is getting very up close and personal for him. You will find if you know God through the Bible, first thing that happens.

As you meet the ultimately glorious, ever loving and gracious, perfectly pure and good God of the Bible as he speaks, accept his revelation not as rules but as a reaching for us know him, think – wow, I am nothing like Him. This guy, not that he sees a law he's broken "do not murder, God hates murder, whoops I have murdered someone" sometimes is like that. Much more like, exposing bad stuff about me I didn't even know what was there.

Meet God, not just my obvious faults being exposed in my life, spiritual facial, bringing all of my hidden impurities to the surface. Reaction to having God's words, is to say

Forgive my hidden faults, I don't even know they are there, please forgive me for them.

Keep me from the arrogance of wilfully doing what I like. As your words show me that you are really the personal God who the whole of our wondrous world and sky speaks of please, keep me from the wilful arrogance that says I am going to do what I like. Infected with pretending you are not God, more deeply than I realised, but now I have these amazing words showing me you – keep me from that terrible wilful arrogance.

Can this deep awareness of what we call sin, my deep hidden flaws, my wilful arrogance, can that be the experience of joy this guy has been describing.

As a Christian yes it is. Verse 14, God whose grandeur charges creation is as you get to know him a rock and a redeemer, reliable, caring one who is, if we come to him, for us, knows our sin more than we even know it and loves us deeply, save and rescue if that is what we want.

How can he be the God who gloriously made everything, also exposes me and also is a solid rock? God the Bibles words bring us is the Lord Jesus. Person who was God – perfect word expressing God's character. As you get to know him you will find this perfect generous love and grace that makes us realise our own dirtiness, our own impurity. You will also find him offering himself, everything he has to save, to win, to redeem us back to himself. You will find this God who rules the universe, whose speech pours out of every beautiful sunrise offering in Jesus to be our personal rock, friend reliable faithful God.

Let me tell you, if that is how you view the Bible, use the Bible, rather let God use the Bible in your life, find your soul revived, heart joyful, eyes enlightened. Such deep and amazing precious experience in taking off all the masks, no more self justifying, no more pretending, exposed for who I am, in that state being safely loved cared for, redeemed by the very God whose glory is in the skies. Experience of being connected to the force who lies behind the beauty of the skies through his words really will bring joy to your heart.