



Roanoke, Virginia

January 2, 2022

***“Gold in Plain Sight”***

*Part VII of the Sermon Series “Advent in Plain Sight”*

*Psalm 19:1-10*

**Rev. Benjamin S. Brannan**

- 1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- 2 Day to day pours forth speech,  
and night to night declares knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech, nor are there words;  
their voice is not heard;
- 4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.  
In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
- 5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,  
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 nothing is hid from its heat.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the decrees of the Lord are sure,  
making wise the simple;
- 8 the precepts of the Lord are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the Lord is clear,



enlightening the eyes;  
**9** the fear of the Lord is pure,  
enduring forever;  
the ordinances of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.  
**10** More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey,  
and drippings of the honeycomb.

I have always been a bit fascinated with outer space: stars, constellations, the vastness of what's out there. I was driving home from church the other week and I noticed a bright orange star in the sky that seemed out of place. It caught my eye, and I kept an eye on it (I was driving safely). When I got home, I downloaded the Sky Guide app on my phone and stepped outside to find that strange orange spec once more. I pointed my phone at it and voila... SATURN! Not only did I see SATURN, but right above it was another bright orange-ish spec...JUPITER! And then below Jupiter was a faint grey-ish spec... VENUS! .... These 3 planets lined up beautifully in the night sky just over the horizon. It was so cool! When Valerie got home I was like a little kid showing my parents something I found, "Come here, come here, look at this!"

Some of you may not be that into astronomy, or maybe you just like the movies, but you might have been stuck to the computer like I was back in 2015 when the New Horizons mission finally achieved its Pluto flyby. It was incredible! If you don't remember this mission, NASA sent a space module toward Pluto to capture pictures as it flew by. The highest resolution picture of Pluto from Earth was taken by the Hubble Space Telescope in 1994, which looked just like grey-scaled squares pieced together. But in July of 2015, the Pluto flyby provided a vivid image of the planet. The world gasped at the iconic "heart" of Pluto and marveled at the diverse terrain surrounding it. But what struck me about all of this was the fact that the New Horizon launch was 9 years prior! It launched on January 19, 2006, and it reached Pluto in July of 2015... What!?! That is almost incomprehensible. It took a space shuttle 9 years to get to Pluto and reach the edge of our solar system. And that's just our system.

"The heavens are telling the story of God's glory" the psalmist declares.

Did you know... The Earth spins at a speed of about 1,000 miles per hour, and orbits around the sun at about 67,000 miles per hour!

Did you know... That there are over 4,000 planets orbiting distant stars (or their own Suns) and scientists estimate there may be as many as 100 billion solar systems in our own Milky Way galaxy.

"The heavens are telling the story of God's glory, and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork."



Did you know... The moon is 238,855 miles away, you can fit 30 Earths between us and the moon!

Did you know... The sun light we see is actually 8 minutes old. That's because Earth is 93 million miles away from the Sun and light travels 186, 282 miles per second, taking light a little over 8 minutes to reach the earth. And when we look at the North Star, we see light that is 680 years old.

“The heavens are telling the story of God’s glory” and “Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge”

Did you know... That space is utterly silent. That's because sound waves need a medium to travel, and with no atmosphere in space, sound cannot travel.

“The heavens are telling the story of God’s glory” but “There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard”

The wonder and vastness and beauty of outer space tell the story of God’s glory, the story of God’s creative awesomeness, the story of God’s imaginative handiwork!

The psalmist declares God is reflected by the heavens. Even more, the heavens not only reflect God, but all of creation also pours forth speech, yells out celestial words of wonder, to communicate who God is to human beings.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

All of it, all we know about life here on Earth and life out there and beyond has a creator. Communicated through the various realms of creation, we learn each day who God is by what God has created. “And God declared that it was good”

God is transcendent, above and beyond all creation. But God is also immanent, a sure presence here and now and all around. The God-knowledge made known in the grandeur of creation, is also very present in everything we see—for everything we see is part of creation. Everywhere the psalmist looks, and everywhere we look, God’s beauty and goodness and loveliness are revealed.

“The heavens are telling the glory of the God, and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork.” Can we hear it? Can we hear the syllables of the stars’ speech and the harmony of the star’s song? Can we perceive the heavenly percussion of God’s glory proclaimed? Are we aware of this cosmic communication?



The psalmist says NO. “Their voice is not heard.” All of creation communicates God’s character, telling of God’s glory, but human beings do not have the ears to hear and the hearts to receive this gift of revelation. God is speaking, creation is calling, seeking us out like an unrelenting and searing sun. And we are not aware.

How then do we come to know God for who God is?

God’s law.

The psalmist moves from the grandeur of creative revelation to the gift of God’s law for humans. The epitome of divine perfection made known in creation becomes evident in God’s law, it becomes evident through the gift of the law. All of creation, heaven and earth, reveal the character of God, but God’s Law, the Torah, ministers to the human person. The law’s work is specific; the law’s work is salvific.<sup>1</sup>

God’s law is to be desired more than any gold, even the finest gold. Desired more than any earthly riches because the gift of God’s law provides so much more.

God’s perfect law revives the soul.

God’s stable rule guides the simple.

God’s just demands delight the heart.

God’s clear commands sharpen vision.

God’s faultless decrees stand forever.

God’s right judgements keep their truth.

And it is this law, God’s rule, God’s demands, God’s commandments, decrees, and judgements that Jesus came to fulfill. “Do not think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.”

Jesus came to communicate to the world what the heavens have proclaimed since the beginning of time; Jesus came to tell the story of God’s glory; Jesus came to make known what we have failed to perceive: God’s law is made perfect in love.

If God’s perfect law revives the soul, then God’s Word enfleshed fulfills the promise.

If God’s stable rule guides the simple, then God’s beloved Son makes love real.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles A. Wiley, from the Theological Perspective on Psalm 19, *Feasting on the Word*, Year B vol. 2.



If God's just demands delight the heart, then God's begotten Son binds our brokenness.

If God's clear commands sharpen vision, then God's incarnate revelation cures our blindness.

If God's decrees stand forever, and God's right judgements keep their truth, then God's indwelling Son is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

When we seek to live into God's law of love made known in Jesus Christ, we then return to God our creator and experience the veil being lifted from our eyes and the weight being lifted from our lives to behold the here-and-now and never-ending story of God's glory.<sup>2</sup>

God's glory is all around us: in the sway of the tree branches, in far off beams of light from Saturn, in the chirp of a bird, in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup, in the silence of space and in the silence of the morning, and in the cry of a baby.

Born for us was Jesus the Christ, the one who came to fulfil God's perfect, just, pure, true law, God's law of love. More than gold, even the finest gold, are we to desire God's law.

Given to us was a Son, giving sight to our blindness, reviving our weary souls, offering wisdom to our ignorance, providing joy to our hearts. And so, with the Word made flesh, Emanuel, God-with-us, we have been given the opportunity to see God's beauty and goodness and loveliness in everyone and in everything and tell the story of God's glory with the heavens forevermore.

Imagine what life would be like if we recognized the beauty of God's glory in everything and truly listened to the story the heavens proclaim? Perhaps, in doing so, our great prayer is answered, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

May it be so. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Jill Duffield, *Advent in Plain Sight*, p.153.

