

Creation is media. It is a means of communication, of *telling*, the combination of cherished canvas and oils by which the Great Artist displays His magnificent story. David, in looking out at the grandeur of Creation, like we saw last week, sees a grand storyteller, the personification of the skies and the expanses above him – a musician singing of the splendor of God. That’s what is meant by the word, “recount”. It means to tell a story of what happened, to recall the tale as a bard. And what does this tale consist of? It consists of the “the glory of God”.

The story recounted in this majestic media is of the glory of the even more majestic God. But this word, glory, while sung a lot in church and even used in common vernacular when we speak of our “glory days” or some beautiful piece of artwork or food as “glorious”. But, what does the word actually mean to David? Well, it is actually the word for “weight.” Mass. Substance. Heaviness. The idea is not limited to beauty, as we usually use it, but rather to substance and significance, impact and impression. It is the force of something’s existence. So, we could say that there are degrees of glory just as there are degrees of forcefulness or impact or weightiness. What the skies and expanse are telling is the story of the weightiness and force of God’s existence and His works, both in its beauty and its power.

Of course, God does not have physical mass. He does not have weight that can be measured by the imprint of His feet upon the sand or weighed by how He bends light. In fact, His existential substance is so far superior to the physical world that the Universe itself is the evidence of His impact, and therefore He must be more substantial than all physical evidence combined! His weightiness must be limitless!

This existential weightiness of God is announced through the works of His hands upon the expanses above our heads. That is what David sees. He looks up into the Heavens and sees the impact of God, the evidence of His force and power. When Paul wrote to the Romans and begins to explain what is wrong with humanity, all of humanity, you can see Psalm 19’s influence upon him, as he writes that “what can be known about

God is plain to humanity, because God has shown it to them. For, his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, even since the creation of the world, in the things which have been made. Therefore, they are without excuse” for suppressing the truth and refusing to honor Him or give Him thanks.

The story has been told upon such media, and it is continuing to be told. In fact, David is clear to show in verse 2 the *constancy* of this storytelling. “Day to day” and “Night to night” this story goes on, bubbling forth information and announcing knowledge about the God who wields unfathomable impact, eternal power and a nature distinctly different than anything created. This constancy, this always present revelation to the world, means that no man is without excuse for refusing to honor God or give him thanks. It means also that there is no human being who has ever lived who has not heard this story. This is what David means when he writes that there are no words or languages or speech from man to man that exists where the story of Creation and its words and language and speech have not already spoken. He even goes so far as to say that if Creation’s voice were to stop, then so would all other speech upon the earth. The story told in the Created Order, of the glory and magnificence and splendor of God, is the foundational story being told all the time and in every place since the creation of the world. God is powerful, eternal, and divine. Nothing can compare to Him. Nothing can stand before him to wage war and expect to injure him. Nothing, not Satan, not angels, not demons, not man, can go toe-to-toe with God and move Him anymore than you can blow on the waves and move the ocean.

But David doesn’t only see the story of God’s power and weightiness. He also sees that Creation is set within limits. Each element of God’s creation has its lines in which it stays, its boundaries within which it remains to tell its story. In fact, part of the way in which we see the glory of God is within the boundedness of Nature. The skies have their place, and thank the Lord that the stars don’t come down to earth!

As we look closer into this cosmological opus we see that these boundaries are so precisely set that any infinitesimal deviation from them would have so drastically altered the Universe that it could not exist at all, or it surely could not exist with any form of life. Scientists call this the “fine tuning” of the physical constants of the Universe.

There are a number of these constants, but I only want to mention a couple. In the observed Universe, which we, like David, can see, let us take a different tact and look down, into the smaller parts: atoms. There is a ratio of protons to electrons in all known atomic matter. If that ratio were to deviate by a maximum deviation of  $1:10^{37}$ , the Universe could not have formed. Now, to imagine how infinitesimally small this maximum deviation could be, Hugh Ross gives an illustration:

One part in  $10^{37}$  is such an incredibly sensitive balance that it is hard to visualize. The following analogy might help: Cover the entire North American continent in dimes all the way up to the moon, a height of about 239,000 miles (In comparison, the money to pay for the U.S. federal government debt would cover one square mile less than two feet deep with dimes.). Next, pile dimes from here to the moon on a billion other continents the same size as North America. Paint one dime red and mix it into the billions of piles of dimes. Blindfold a friend and ask him to pick out one dime. The odds that he will pick the red dime are one in  $10^{37}$ . (The Creator and the Cosmos, p115)

And then there is the strong nuclear force. This is the force which holds atoms together and keeps their constituent portions from flying apart. Consider that our Sun (and all others) ‘burns’ by the process of fusion. It fuses hydrogen and other higher elements together. When two hydrogen atoms fuse, 0.7% of the mass of the hydrogen atom is converted into energy. If the amount of this nuclear matter were slightly smaller – 0.6% instead of 0.7% - a proton could not bond to a neutron, and the universe would exist only of hydrogen. With no heavy elements, there would be no rocky planets formed and certainly no life. If the amount of matter converted by the fusion of hydrogen were slightly larger, say 0.8%, fusion would happen so readily and rapidly that no hydrogen would have survived the creation of the universe. Again,

there would be no solar systems and no life. The number must, for the universe to exist in its present form, lie finely-tuned exactly between 0.6% and 0.8%.

The very fact that there are dozens of such physical constants which must be so finely tuned for the Universe to look as it does, demonstrates that constants like this are *necessary* for the existence of all matter. These constants are another way of saying that Nature holds within her limits. We make conclusions in astronomy and physics and chemistry because these constants are so constant, these boundaries are so bound that we call them Natural Laws. And so they are...and they lead us to ask why Nature has boundaries if there is no Mapmaker and why Nature stays within her limits if there is no Cosmic Referee.

All of this is to say that Nature stays within her boundaries. And not only that, but David sees this obedience to her boundaries as that which brings her great joy! Look at the description in verse 2: the skies “bubble over” to tell the story. That is not forced. That is not mere duty. It is joy! It is delight! It is the effervescence of the person who cannot keep the story in because it is so exciting and amazing and wonderful.

It's like my son, who is constantly bubbling over right now to tell his hopes and dreams of what Christmas is going to bring. He cannot keep it in. Why? He is excited and hopeful and it is a wonder to him of all the good that is coming and that he has already had a taste of in the past.

I can remember over 20 years ago when I had planned to ask Katie to marry me. She was coming to visit me in South Carolina where I was staying with 50 other college kids on a Campus Crusade mission. I had shopped for and purchased the ring, and the word had spread that when Katie came to visit in the next couple of weeks, I was going to ask her to marry me. But, I had one problem. This problem was from Mississippi. This problem was a problem because she was too excited and was known for not being able to contain her excitement. Now, I knew that if I brought Katie back to the group without her knowing of my plan, that this Mississippi bubbler would bubble up all

over my surprise. Therefore, I took Katie from the airport directly to the beach and in a whirlwind of confusion and joy from being apart, asked her to marry me. And do you know what happened when I finally brought Katie back to the group? Bubbly Mississippi asked to see the ring. She couldn't contain herself. Nature is like that. "Have you seen the ring?!" the skies proclaim. "Do you seek the Maker's glory?!" the heaven's declare. They can't keep it in. They rejoice to keep their colors within the frame of the Artist's canvas.

You see the same with the sun. The sun is likened to a groom leaving the room where he has prepared for the wedding in order to go pick up his bride for the ceremony. Now, how would you describe this groom? Dutiful? Bound? Without freedom? No! You describe such a man as rejoicing! Expectant! Excited! He loves this journey because he loves his bride. He is rejoicing to leave the eastern horizon because of great joy and he runs his course across the sky lustily, like a great athlete loves to run his race.

This image reminds me of Eric Liddell, the Scottish Olympian of the 1920's. His story was told in the movie, *Chariots of Fire*. It was said that Liddell ran with such joy that he appeared to flail as he ran. In the words of Eric Metaxes, a biographer, "arms flailing like windmills and knees pumping high. As he approached the finish line, Eric would throw his head back and open his mouth wide...It was almost as if in throwing his head back, Eric had to rely totally on God to direct him to the finish line, since he couldn't see it himself." (*Seven Men: and the secret of their greatness*).

In the move, when Eric's sister, who wanted him to quit his athletics for the sake of global mission work (which he would eventually do in China and is still remembered there), Eric described what it meant for him to run his hardest and most joyfully for the Lord. He told his sister, "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." This joy in doing what God has designed you to do, and being whom God has designed you to be, is the joy which David ascribes to the very heavenly bodies of Creation who do not stray from their assigned courses, but find their greatest joy in following the

design which God has assigned to each of them, and through their obedience to tell the story of His glory, the recalling of His greatness and substance and impact upon all the earth because of His own nature and being and existence.

Now, as beautiful and wondrous as Nature is, and how it points to the more beautiful and more wonderful Artist who designed it, David moves immediately in verse 7-9 to an even more beautiful and more wondrous canvas upon which God has told His story: His Instructions.

While the natural world is recounting the glory of God, it also is apparent, from Paul's word to the Romans, that all of us are very determined to suppress that truth and alter or repress that clear story. Therefore, God has, according to His grace, stooped to give us an even clearer word, an even more thorough and particular telling of His story through His Spirit's writing of His word in writing.

And yet, the relationship between the Natural Revelation of God's glory and the Written Revelation, or what theologians have called 'special revelation', of God's glory in the Bible, is correlated by the things which David ascribes. That is, just as the heavens tell the story of God's glory from within their assigned roles and boundaries (the skies are to be the tent, the sun to run within this tent along his assigned race course and not outside of it), so also the Scriptures are the tent for our assigned race course, the boundaries and lane upon which we are to run the race of our existence.

And every description of the word here in verses 7-9 are not components of the word, but descriptions of the entire revelation of God given to us in writing, in the Bible. And note that David shifts from using the general form of God, Elohim, in verse 1, to God's covenant name revealed in a personal relationship with man, YHWH, to describe this word. He uses it 6 times in vv7-9.

He has given us "instruction". It is the revealed instructions, the boundaries and design and plan of the LORD given to us in His Word that "restores the soul." It gives

life. Like air gives life to the lungs, and without it you die, so the Word of the LORD is life to the soul, and without it, we suffocate.

James Packer, so eloquent in the gifts which God has given to him, writes it so well, I will just quote him here:

“We are familiar with the thought that our bodies are like machines, needing the right routine of food, rest and exercise if they are to run efficiently, and liable, if filled up with the wrong fuel – alcohol, drugs, poison – to lose their power of healthy functioning and ultimately to ‘seize up’ entirely in physical death. What we are, perhaps, slower to grasp is that God wishes us to think of our souls in a similar way. As rational persons, we were made to bear God’s moral image – that is, our souls were made to ‘run’ on the practice of worship, law-keeping, truthfulness, honesty, discipline, self-control, and service to God and our fellows. If we abandon these practices, not only do we incur guilt before God; we also progressively destroy our own souls. Conscience atrophies, the sense of shame dries up, one’s capacity for truthfulness, loyalty and honesty is eaten away, one’s character disintegrates.”

*(Knowing God, p114)*

David continues: “Testimony” of the LORD, is the word used of God’s own self-attestation through His own covenant, and became a technical term for the Scriptures. This testimony of God’s character, works, promises, and commands makes the naïve person wise. It shows us how to thrive. An interesting one is the word translated “precepts”, which is a word which is elsewhere used of a charge given to an inferior by a superior. However, in its uses, the charge is always intended for the good of the one given charge! Does that makes sense? God, in charging us with our boundaries and commands and responsibilities, is doing so for our good. And David says that they “bring the heart joy”.

The “commandment” of the LORD, or legal declaration, enlightens the eyes. It opens blinded eyes to what is real, good, true, and eternal. Without it, we are blind and groping in the darkness, imagining what might be there, but not knowing.

The “fear” of the LORD is His fearsomeness, or awesomeness, revealed in His Word, more than about our fear of Him. It is His glorious weightiness that endures forever, and His Word reveals how glorious that He is.

The “rules” of the LORD is more like His “decisions”. These aren’t rules for us, but rather His rulings over what is good and what is evil, what integrates and what disintegrates, what is beautiful and what is hideous. It is His Word which decides these things, which rules on such questions, and they are “right in totality”. That is, in every part and with every ruling, they are right.

The adjectives that describe these Scriptures begin with the truth that it is complete, it is perfect. If you notice, at the end of each of the lines, you have adjectives which describe His Word: complete, stable, straight, pure, clean, trustworthy. These are very strong adjectives about the capability and wisdom of the Word of God. It is a boundary which is capable of doing all the things which are then described about the descriptions: restoring the soul, making wise the naïve, bringing joy to the heart and light to the eyes, enduring forever, and being totally right.

All of these descriptions show how straight and true and trustworthy the Word of God is, as a boundary and “straight edge”, for the tent in which humanity is to joyfully run our circuit, to run our race, and not only to run our race, but to run the race with joy and life and fruitfulness rather than futility. God’s Word is the standard by which all other things are judged. What that means is that we don’t measure the Word of God up to something else in order to see if it is straight and true and judge it by that.

There is a crooked-edged component of human ideology, I believe, by which we attempt to do just that. It is that presupposition which sees humanity’s greatest good as that which is *absolutely morally* free. What philosophers mean by *absolutely* is that for man to be truly free, he cannot be impacted by any outside force. In other words, no lanes, no race course, no lines, no boundaries. This freedom, they contend, is what it means to live the fullness of life.

Again, Packer continues,

[By neglecting God's design] one not only becomes desperately miserable; one is steadily being dehumanized...Richard Baxter was right to formulate the alternatives as 'a Saint – or a Brute': that, ultimately, is the only choice, and everyone, sooner or later, consciously or unconsciously opts for one or the other.

Nowadays some will maintain, in the name of humanism, that the 'Puritan' sexual morality of the Bible is inimical [*hostile*] to the attainment of true human maturity, and that a little more license [freedom] makes for richer living. Of this ideology we would only say that the proper name for it is not humanism but brutism. Sexual laxity does not make you more human, but less so; it brutalizes you and tears your soul to pieces. The same is true wherever any of God's commandments are disregarded. We are only living truly human lives just so far as we are laboring to keep God's commandments; no further." (*Knowing God*, p114)

This is how David sees it. He knows, and sings, that humanity is the most free and living most abundantly when he stays within the tent of God's Word, running the race within the lines of God's written Scriptures. It is here that he is most free and it is here, bounded by God's designed course, that he finds the greatest joy.

Tim Keller explains this idea of freedom very well in the quote which you see on the front of your bulletin. He explains, "Because a fish absorbs oxygen from water, not air, it is free only if it is restricted to water. If a fish is 'freed' from the water and put on the grass to explore, its freedom to move, and soon live, is destroyed....Real freedom is finding the right restrictions."

We were not created to be absolutely free. We were created to live, move, and breath within boundaries. We cannot jump off of a 200-foot cliff and expect to land safely. We are bound by natural law. We know this to be true, and even the philosophers who want to assign absolute moral freedom to humanity recognize that this would be true in no other sphere of life, yet they somehow maintain that it is in our moral sphere. In other words, you don't see those philosophers trying to leap across the Grand Canyon or stop cars with their minds. Why not? Because they know that we are bound, not free. What David is saying is that Scriptures also bind the moral man.

They reveal (they don't create) God's boundaries, not to impose joylessness and frugality upon us, but rather to reveal true and lasting and abundant joy and life to us *because we were designed to thrive within the boundaries of God's Word.*

And do you see that? The boundaries and commands and instructions and promises given to man by God in His Word is intended for our joy. They bring joy to the heart and light to the eyes, wisdom to the naïve, and restore the soul. Therefore, they are more desirable than the finest gold, and sweeter than the overflowing honeycomb's offering. These descriptions are about delight and desire and joy and enjoyment. This is the context which David brings to the character of the Bible for the human being.

And the reason that the Scriptures bring joy is because man is limited in his knowledge and incapable of seeing. This is what David means when he asks in v12, "For, who can discern his own errors?" The answer is nobody! We cannot look inside of our own souls and see our errors. We all do what we think is right in the moment, even when we know that others would think it wrong. We do what we want...all the time. So, who can discern his own errors? V11 – "Your servant is warned by them" and it God's commands which warn us by shining light into the darkness and revealing what is unknown, and by their light I find a great reward.

So, who can acquit me from the things which are hidden even to me?! I don't know all the errors of my own soul. How can I find life and joy when I am blind to what truly grants it? The Word enlightens what is good. God has spoken to us to tell us what is right and true, what is just and honorable, and what departs from these things. Rather than listen to our own self-proscription of morality, we must bow to the Designer, to the Artist to interpret His own painting and explain the story to us through His enlightening Word of truth.

David recognizes in the final two verses, that only if God acts will he ever be clean from his sins. Only if God keeps back His own righteous hand from destroying him in his ignorance, but that he also will only grow to walk rightly, to stay in his tent and to

rejoice in his race, if God keeps sin from ruling over him. Then, and only then, will he be complete, purged from such great transgression.

Therefore, He implores the LORD for mercy and grace to redeem him, protect him, and change him. Do you see that? With all the discussion of God's designs, the boundaries of the instruction and revelation from the LORD, David calls Him not "judge" or even the formalized title "God", but "the LORD" (YHWH), the covenant-maker, the grace-giver, the weakling-chooser, and "my rock", which is a word of refuge, not judgment, and "my redeemer", the one who has purchased me for himself and for my joy.

Because we all failed to color within the lines of God's Created order. We left the tent, ground our teeth in anger against the Artist for painting the way that he did, and we sprayed the graffiti of our own media to tell our own story across His holy masterpiece. Do you understand the severity of this? Our sin, even in ignorance, is cosmic graffiti of the majestic God's story! We slashed His canvas and called it "beautiful"! How shall such deathly ruin be repaired? We need a Master Restorer capable and willing, but who but the Majestic Artist could restore such an unmatched masterpiece? We need the Divine Master Restorer.

And we have all failed to run the race within God's commandments. We considered the lanes of our own making more fair, more joy-producing, and a better path. Yet, this path led to our death, our disintegration, our destruction. We need someone to finish the race, to finish it perfectly, to joyfully find the way home. We need a Perfect Runner. The author of Hebrews calls Jesus just that, "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest after the order of the King of Righteousness." (Heb 6:19-20)

And later he says that Jesus fulfilled the law of God, for the Law made nothing perfect. You see, the Law of God cannot save you because you have failed it. It was never given to save you, but to reveal it to you. It is like a GPS. It shows you the route, it lays out the lines, but a GPS cannot drive you to your destination. You need a car. The Law is

powerless to get you to the destination, it shows you lines to life, but Jesus came to pick you up by the power of His indestructible life. Therefore, Hebrews continues, “for the law made nothing perfect, but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God...This makes Jesus a guarantor of a better promise.” (Heb 7:19,22)

David implore God for an “acceptance” in the words of his mouth. This word is the word for a sacrifice accepted in the place of one’s sins. Jesus guarantees a better promise because He became an acceptable sacrifice. He, the Master Restorer, the Incarnate Word of God through whom all things were splashed upon the cosmos, and He became the criminal, the ruining ravager with spray paint on this index finger. He bore the wrath of God in our place so that you and I could be made acceptable to God. AND, He, raised from the dead by that same Artist, will restore all that our sin has ruined. He will remake all things to the way they are supposed to be. How? Because He always painted within the frame and never failed His Father’s design.

Thus here, upon the rock of God’s mercy and the redemption of God’s own works, does David foretell the Great Story of his greater Son. Jesus, whose name means “the LORD saves”, for He will save His people from their sins.

You and I need to know where the boundaries lie, for our joy! Yet, we also need a Rock and a Redeemer to get us there and to keep us there and to answer for us when we have failed. What do we see for a hope of restoration? We see Jesus, whose words and musings in the presence of the LORD were always acceptable to His Father, and who, according to the great mercies of God, can get you on the road and take you all the way home, if you will put down your self-will and entrust yourself to the Master Restorer and learn from him how to paint between the lines for your joy.