

West Branch Community of Christ

Participant Companion Guide – Lectionary Lessons Pilot

March 8, 2015

Third Sunday in Lent

Theme: REVIVE MY SOUL

Psalms 19 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

1The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

2Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

3There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

4yet 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,
5which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

6Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

7The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;

8the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes;

9the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

10More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

11Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

12But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.

13Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

14Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Central Ideas:

- ***All of creation is speaking God's glory, yet humanity cannot hear it.***
- ***The law provides a way for God's revelation to be known for those who enfold it.***
- ***The world can know the revelation of God as proclaimed in the law through those who incarnate the spirit of it in everyday life.***

Exploring the Scripture

Psalms 19 is a very appropriate text for meditation and spiritual reading. Spending time with the text in journaling may be helpful to the preacher who is to bring the word of God to life in the congregation. This text provides a dynamic and rich environment from which to preach.

Psalms 19 consists of a proclamation of God's revelation in creation (vv. 1–6), a proclamation of the goodness of the law (vv. 7–13), and a prayer that our consideration and application of these words are acceptable to God (v. 14).

Verses 1–6 proclaim the heavens speak of God's glory. All day and all night speech is uttered, knowledge is pouring forth from creation, and we do not have ears to hear. The words of creation penetrate through all the earth and all of the world known and unknown. This is a tragic text in that something so beautiful as God revealing God's self is falling on deaf ears.

But there is hope. There is the law. Verses 7–13 proclaim we do have a way to encounter the Living God and know what creation proclaims day and night. The Torah—the five books of Moses—according to theologian John Calvin, can provide three functions: mirror, fence, and guide. Torah as mirror judges us by our own reflection in its precepts. Torah as fence provides, not holiness, but confinement from straying too far from God and toward evil.

Finally Torah as guide enables Christians to know how to live. It is no mistake that Psalms 19 is paired with Exodus 20:1–17—the Decalogue (Ten Commandments)—and the preacher is well advised to consider the Exodus text while preparing for pulpit ministry on the Third Sunday in Lent.

The psalmist writes that the law revives the soul; it provides a basis for understanding as the church moves forward in mission. It is important to note the Jewish tradition of Pentecost was the celebration of the coming of the Torah, 50 days after the Passover. Christians celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Easter. These two celebrations

are not only linked in timing but in the precept; there is no holiness without the law and the Holy Spirit working together.

As a church, Community of Christ has been called to en flesh the passion and concern of Christ in the lives of its people and among its neighbors (Doctrine and Covenants 164:9d). This is how the words spoken by all of creation are now spoken in our neighborhoods. By allowing the law to take root in our hearts—not in some leather-bound books tucked under our arms—the good news of God’s salvation walks around our cities as we go to school, work, or ministry (Mission Initiative: Develop Disciples to Serve). By our interaction with others we are able to be the incarnation of Christ’s peace and our neighbors will experience Christ in us (Mission Initiatives: Invite People to Christ, Experience Congregations in Mission).

Verse 14 is a prayer that the witness we bear and the thoughts we think are acceptable to God. Living in Christ revives the soul and when the church is revived the kingdom is near, it goes wherever the church goes and salvation in all its forms is revealed to our communities.