

## Psalm 19

### All Nature Sings

Professor Chris Schoon writes,

Tiffany. Sherman. Webster. Albion. Devil's Punchbowl. Over the last 8 years, these and several of the other 100+ waterfalls in Hamilton, ON, have become my friends. Admittedly, I feel a bit weird describing these locations as friends, as if my social relationships now include inanimate objects. But quite honestly, I know these waterfalls better – and likely have more pictures from my time with them - than I do with 90% of the people I'm connected to via my social media accounts.

Tiffany and Sherman – and the Bruce Trail that runs between them – have become places of pondering for me. During one stretch when both my church work and my academic work felt overwhelming, I recall sitting near the basin of Tiffany. Looking up from the notebook in which I had furiously been pouring out my complaints to God and scribbling together random to-do lists, I noticed the weather-worn rocks in the creek bed.

Most of those rocks have likely been in that space for centuries, if not millennia. Their once-sharp corners smoothed by currents of water and wind. And yet, somehow in their deteriorated state, they still reminded me of God's faithfulness to a thousand generations. They spoke to me of a peace that endures. They taught me about a God who generously welcomes the broken and discarded as part of his creation's beauty. I sat in awe as those rocks cried out.<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein the psalmist writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of God's hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge." (v2).

Here in Northwestern Ontario, we are so fortunate to live in this area, with the catch phrase, Superior by Nature. We are living in the midst of some of the most beautiful natural wilderness on the planet. Lakes, woods, waterfalls, streams, trails, and so much more is right here at our doorstep. Our city of Thunder Bay is not so large that we cannot see the stars or moon at night. We have a front row seat to nature at its best and at its most powerful.

It is about creation of the whole planet and the space beyond that the psalmist writes about God's handiwork. What is interesting is God's people have always recognized

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<sup>1</sup> [Chris Schoon. Pausing to Ponder | Reformed Worship](#) Accessed September 14, 2024.

that creation points to God but creation is not to be worshipped as God. Other ancient cultures saw the stars, sun, and moon as deities unto themselves. This was not so of the Hebrew people. What these celestial objects pointed to was God. It was a way to understand God's provision, help, power, presence and love.

In our own time, through science and space exploration, we know that these things are made of gas and matter. It can take away the wonder of it all if we look at things from only a scientific perspective and it also disregards the emotional reaction many have when watching the sun rise or the sun set. Laying on our backs to watch the clouds move against the hue of a blue sky with the green leaves of trees dancing with the slightest of breezes. The power of ocean waves and the pounding of a mighty waterfall.

Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, writes about God as an artist or the author of a book and that science tells us what things are made of but does not point to the creator. A piece of art is meant to evoke something within us. Or writing, regardless of whether it is good or bad, still points to something beyond itself, is meant to make us feel something. The analysis of the paint in the art or the canvas itself, or the computer used to write a script and use of grammar does not tell us about the creator's heart. It is the artwork itself, the movie script, poem, or story that points toward the creator of the piece.

As we speak of the stars, one might harken to the painting by Van Gogh called Starry Night. It has sparked the imagination of so many. It elicits a response; it points its creator. Without the creator, Van Gogh there would be no painting, the use of materials would not be up for discussion, the way the brush strokes were done or the use of light and dark would not mean anything.

McLaughlin writes, "...the methods of science and a strictly scientific consideration of the starry heavens cannot show that they declare the glory of God. The Divine glory is not that sort of thing... [the] claim is like that of someone who, having done a thorough chemical analysis of Van Gogh's Starry Night, claims that the great painting shows no evidence of art, and is mere canvas and paint."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say, "Another reason we cannot see nature as a work of art is because of the split between the scientific and artistic communities. We do not see nature as a work of art because artists do not portray scientific discoveries artistically, and scientists do not often write artfully."<sup>3</sup>

The psalmist, in a sense, mediates between science and art, the act of creation. We know that our world and the space around it is created, the psalmist understood that as well. The psalmist also recognizes that creation is art, beauty, meaningful beyond its structure and components.

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<sup>2</sup> The Heavens Declare the Glory of God. February 29, 2016 by [Dr. Thomas McLaughlin, PhD](#)  
[The Heavens Declare the Glory of God - Homiletic & Pastoral Review \(hprweb.com\)](#)  
Accessed September 14, 2024

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The psalm, in writing, moves then from creation to God's Word. Again, we are so likely to hear things like the law, decrees, precepts, commandment, fear, and ordinances as stifling creativity and life. As making rules rather than granting freedom. Yet that is not at all the purpose of God's Word. The Word of the Lord is about life-giving ways of being in the world. Ways that connect us to God, to each other, and to creation. The Word of the Lord, as the psalmist so aptly says to us, the Word of the Lord revives the soul, makes wise the simple, brings rejoicing to the heart, enlightens the eyes. It is to be desired more than gold; it is sweeter than honey.

All of this is wonderful, but what does that do for us today. So creation is beautiful, God's handiwork. How does that make a difference when one is struggling, hurting, broken? What difference does it make in my rejoicing? It tells us that regardless of what is going on in our lives that there is something bigger, something beautiful, something and someone to be praised, knowing that creation points toward and pour forth speech of wholeness. It points to a creator, an artist, a writer in creation and in our lives who is passionate about us and our relationship with each other, with God, and with creation itself.

We can go into God's handiwork and be made whole through the healing power of God's creation by spending time under the night sky and looking up at the moon and the stars, listening to the night animals. We can go spend time at a brook, stream, river, lake, ocean, or waterfall and be healed by its motion, whether it be a trickling tranquillity or a reminder of power. We can sit in the woods, a meadow, or in our yards and be at peace. We can look at a diamond, better than a diamond set between emeralds and know that God's word is more exquisite than that. It's better than strawberries in spring, better than red, ripe strawberries.

We are encouraged at the end of the psalm to rely on God who is our rock and our redeemer. To hope and trust that in being in relationship with God and with creation, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts would be acceptable to God who is ever present and loves us and will guide us.

The Word of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork. Be at peace, knowing that the God of science and of creation, of beauty and wonder goes with you. Amen.