

## Psalm 19

Vigil of Peter & Paul; 3rd Lent Year B

26th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B

3rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year C

15th Sunday Ordinary Time Year C

19:1-6 – Morning Prayer Monday Week 2

Office of Readings for Common

of Apostles and of Virgins

19:7-14 – Prayer during the Day Monday Week 1

The title reads: 'To the leader. A Psalm\* of David'. 19:1-6 may be adapted from a Canaanite hymn. The rest is post exilic.

### Part One

The Psalmist contemplates the heavens and listens to their silent message. Nature is inviting us to join in its cosmic hymn of praise. He then focuses on the sun. Like a bridegroom after a night of love, the sun comes forth to run its course with joy. It is inviting us to do the same.

We might compare the Canticle of St. Francis.  
Also the following:

May the glory of YHWH endure forever;  
may YHWH rejoice in his creation ...  
I will sing to YHWH as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God  
while I have breath to do so.

– Psalm 104:31,33

The message of the Gospel is even clearer. Paul writes:

Have they not heard? Indeed they have; for 'their announcement goes out through all the earth, and their proclamation to the utmost bounds of the world.'

– Romans 10:18

In Assyrian art the sun is portrayed bearing justice on its wings. The prophet Malachi writes:

For you who revere my name  
the sun of righteousness shall rise,  
with healing in its wings.

– Malachi 4:2

Jesus is the sun (the bridegroom), and the Spirit is the warmth of his love.

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us.

– Luke 1:78

**<sup>1</sup>The heavens proclaim the glory of God; the firmament shows forth the work of his hands.**

**<sup>2</sup>Day unto day takes up the story, and night unto night makes known the message.**

**<sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words; no voice is heard; <sup>4a</sup>yet their announcement goes out through all the earth, and their proclamation to the utmost bounds of the world.**

**<sup>4b</sup>In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun.**

**<sup>5</sup>It comes forth like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a hero runs its course with joy.**

**<sup>6</sup>Its rising is from one extremity of the heavens, and its course runs to the other; nothing is concealed from its burning heat.**

How precious is God's word

John's Gospel portrays Jesus as the light of the world:

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

– John 1:9

The imagery of the Psalmist is repeated in the Book of Sirach:

The sun looks down on everything with its light,  
and the work of the Lord is full of his glory.

– Sirach 42:16

## Part Two

Because we fail to hear the message of the heavens, God gives us the clear instruction of the Torah to guide us as to the course we are to run with joy and love.

**<sup>7</sup>The law\* of YHWH\* is perfect, reviving the soul\*.**

**The decrees of YHWH are sure, making wise the simple.**

**<sup>8</sup>The precepts of YHWH are right, rejoicing the heart\*.**

**The commandment of YHWH is clear, enlightening the eyes.**

**<sup>9</sup>The fear\* of YHWH is pure, enduring forever.**

**The judgments\* of YHWH are true and all of them just\*.**

**<sup>10</sup>More precious are they than gold, than the finest gold; sweeter are they than honey, sweeter than a dripping honeycomb.**

**<sup>11</sup>Your servant is enlightened by them; in keeping them there is great reward.**

See the article 'Law' in the Introduction. 'Decrees' translates the Hebrew *'ēdūt* [עֲדוּת], meaning regulations that result from a witnessed agreement. 'Precepts' translates the Hebrew *piqqûdîm* [פִּקּוּדִים], meaning detailed regulations. 'Commandment' translates the Hebrew *mišwâ* [מִצְוָה] meaning a commandment issued with divine authority. The psalmist treasures the expressions of God's will.

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, YHWH, God of hosts.

– Jeremiah 15:16

He said to me, Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.

– Ezekiel 3:3

God's will revealed in the Law is a source of light.

Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem. ... O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of YHWH!

– Isaiah 2:3,5

The commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light.

– Proverbs 6:23

They kept your children imprisoned through whom the imperishable light of the law was to be given to the world.

– Wisdom 18:4

God's will revealed in the Law takes us by the hand and leads us to liberty and life. It shows sin up for what it is, but cannot of itself liberate us from it. It can, however, lead us to confess our sin and cast ourselves upon God, in this way praising him.

My son, give glory to YHWH God of Israel and make confession to him.  
Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.

– Joshua 7:19

### Part Three

We fail to listen to the clear message of the heavens and we fail to obey the Law. Only God can educate us and refine our conscience so that we become more sensitive to the inadvertent ways in which we fail to do God's will. Only God can scrutinise the hidden depths of our psyche and awaken us to the subtle ways in which we distort our lives and the lives of others by our twisted desires, our hidden motivation and our impure intentions. Only God can liberate us from our pride and folly and our slavery to wilful sin. So we plead with God to deliver us from all that deafens us to God's voice and all that hardens our hearts against following God's will.

Besides grave transgression, the Psalmist is also concerned for unintentional sins and sins of which we are not aware (Leviticus 5:17-18; Numbers 15:22-25).

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your kindness remember me, YHWH!

– Psalm 25:7

You have set our guilt before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

– Psalm 90:8

Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.

– Genesis 4:7

I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

– Romans 7:23

The Psalmist acknowledges God as the only one on whom he can rely and as the only one capable of redeeming us from our inability to listen to the heavens or obey the Law. This is the seventh YHWH in the second part of this psalm! See the article 'Redeemer' in the Introduction.

**<sup>12</sup>But who can recognise hidden errors?  
Absolve me from unconscious faults.**

**<sup>13</sup>Hold your servant back from acts of pride; do not let them have dominion over me.**

**Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of grave transgression\*.**

**<sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, YHWH, my rock and my redeemer\*.**