

## Sermon preached by Louis Bezuidenhout in Inveraray 9 Augustus 2009

### Reading: Psalm 19

Psa 19:1-14 To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. (2) Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (3) There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. (4) Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, (5) which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, 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 there is nothing hidden from its heat. (7) The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; (8) the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; (9) the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules 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. (11) Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (12) Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. (13) Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. (14) Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

### Address

The heavens tell out the glory of God

We may relate to these words in different ways. Some will think of the hymn 'Die Himmel rühmen des ewigen Ehre' from the poem by Christian Fürchtegott Gellert to the melody of Ludwig van Beethoven (Opus 48,4).

It is about the brilliance and the splendour of the sun, moon and stars. Shepherds will remember the starry sky, those from the Southern Hemisphere will remember a constellation like the Southern Cross, that is not seen in the northern hemisphere.

We may think of people who can rightly be called stars. We are proud of our pipe bands who did so well in the competition. When they performed last night on their return, we were all proud of our stars. It is wonderful to see how people use their gifts to achieve great things.

Some may think of the meteoroid shower that happened this week, sometimes referred to as shooting stars. It was visible on two nights. The first night it was cloudy, the second night there was a window during which it could be

see (sadly, I missed it!). As opposed to the usual display, that seems to be eternal, this display lasted only for a short time - the meteoroid leaves a trail as it enters the atmosphere of the earth, then it burns out, or, occasionally may hit the earth. It's glory is short lived.

Today there are people with sadness, perhaps burning questions. Yes, we acknowledge the glory of the heavens, we appreciate those people who are great achievers, the stars among us. But how do you cope with a bereavement - the death of a beloved, even the sad incidence of a still-born child - the little meteoroid, the shooting star, the one who's light was short-lived.

When the Bible speaks about the stars, it is cautious, as it was written at a time when other cultures worshipped the sun, moon and stars as gods. Stars are not to be worshipped - yet they proclaim the glory of him who is worthy of worship. Like pipers and drummers, the sun moon and stars participate in making sacred music, composed by the great composer. They are all in harmony,

(2) Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. (3) There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. (4) Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

The music of the heavens resonate on earth. Like the stars, we are invited to participate in the cosmic hymn.

Num 24:17 I look into the future, And I see the nation of Israel. A king, like a bright star, will arise in that nation. Like a comet he will come from Israel.

Dan 12:3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Rev 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

To us, the music is given as the word of God. The word of God and the splendour of creation complement one another - two strands of melody in counterpoint.

God has given us the most beautiful music. In our Bibles it is translated as the Law. It is an unfortunate translation, creates the impression of legalism. It should read the teaching of God or the word of God

(7) The teaching of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the

simple; (8) the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; (9) the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules 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.

It is no use keeping good music in a filing cabinet, or even to study the patterns of the notes. It has to be sung, it has to be played in order to be appreciated. We have to live the word of God in order to shine like the stars and to participate in the cosmic hymn. We have all received a calling, a purpose, a line to play, to sing.

Life is a song, and love is the music.

What about suffering, untimely death, even the stillborn child? Where is the glory of God? The beauty of the meteoroids may be short-lived - but it is precious. As the entrance of the tiny pieces of matter generate light in the atmosphere of the earth, so even suffering, pain, and even death generate light when it enters the loving atmosphere of friendship, faith, hope and love, when it is surrounded by people who care. The meteoroids short-lived trail of light makes a special contributing to the cosmic hymn to the glory of God.

We are all called to take part in the cosmic hymn to the glory of God.

(14) May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.