

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Reasons for the Hope in Us

The Bible is the Word of God

March 26, 2017

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:19-21

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139

Romans 1:1-7 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, (2) which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, (3) concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh (4) and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, (5) through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, (6) including you who are called to belong

to Jesus Christ, (7) To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning I thought it would be very good for us to be reminded of something that is I suppose in many ways a foundational truth of true religion. These kinds of basic essentials are assumed by us but we can easily forget that they are really quite foreign to the thinking of those who do not know Christ or even to some degree for new Christians.

Every time we meet together as a church, every time you open your Bible, we are demonstrating that we believe the Bible is no ordinary book, but that it is as we say it, *the Word of God*. That is to say, we believe that God has spoken and that His words were inerrantly written down by the human authors - prophets and apostles – just as Peter said:

1 Peter 1:22-25 Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, (23) since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; (24) for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, (25) but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

And again –

2 Peter 1:19-21 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Peter also said this:

1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope

that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

It is requisite then for every Christian to be ready and prepared to “give a reason for the hope” that is in us when someone asks. Surely one of the most fundamental reasons the Christian has faith and hope in Christ is because he or she believes absolutely that the Bible is the authoritative, inspired Word of God and not simply another religious book produced by man that can be taken or left at will.

Furthermore, it is important that WE remind ourselves of this fact, particularly because it has always been a tactic of our enemy (as he did in the Garden of Eden) to creep in and ask “Indeed, has God said?” working to create doubts and destroy our faith.

Listen to this fundamental doctrine stated in our confession of faith:

Chapter 1: Of the Holy Scriptures

1.The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that

knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation.

Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will to his church; and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.

Notice that the very first chapter of the London Confession, and of the Westminster and other historic statements of the Christian faith, and of so many systematic theologies of the Christian church, concerns this very subject – *that the Bible is the*

inspired, inerrant, authoritative Word of God and therefore serves as the rule or authority for all that Christians believe and all that Christians practice.

The very first chapter. The very first thing addressed. Why? Because the Bible is the source of what we believe and what we live.

- How do we know what Jesus taught?
- How do we know who Jesus Christ is?
- How do we know that God created the world and everything in it?
- How do we know the promises God has made to us?
- How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came into this world to die on the cross to pay for the sins of all who believe in Him?
- How do we know that Christ is coming again to judge the world and do away with evil and death once and for all?
- How do we know how God is to be worshipped, or prayed to?

And the answer of course is, *the Bible*. And therefore it is vital that we know that the Bible is no mere production of some human being who decided to create his own religion. Just another Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith or Christian Science by Mary Baker

Eddy, or Jehovah's Witness by Charles Russell and so on?

The Mountains are My Church????

How many times have you heard someone say something like this:

"Well, I believe in God but I don't read the Bible or go to church because I meet God in the mountains. The woods are my church."

In today's sorry state of affairs in so many local churches, I can certainly sympathize with a person who sincerely says this, though of course we know that many people who say such a thing really just don't see the need to read the Bible or take time on Sunday to attend to the worship of God with His people in His church.

But notice once again this statement of what we believe –

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary to salvation.

Think about this very carefully. The creation, the world, the oceans, the forests, and everything in them *does indeed tell us certain things about God*. This is what is meant by "the light of nature and the works of creation" displaying the goodness, wisdom, and power of God. The Bible itself says that this is quite true:

Psalms 19:1-5 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 voice 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.

Here is David the shepherd no doubt at night looking up at the stars and in the daytime at the sun. He says that every human being can look up and see *the glory of God* and understand that everything in the sky (and on the earth) *is the handiwork of God*. Many people today and down through history who ultimately came to a saving knowledge of Christ *began coming to faith by looking up at the stars and thinking, "this could never have just happened. Someone created all this."*

Other people have thought in a similar way about man himself-

Psalms 139:13-14 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. (14) I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

And in fact the Psalmist here goes on to realize something that is missing in most people's lives today and the absence of which is responsible for the rampant sense of meaninglessness and despair that has enveloped so many –

Psalms 139:16-18 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (17) How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (18) If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Understand? Existence in this world without the realization that God exists, that He made us, that He cares for us, that His thoughts toward us are *vast* – more than the grains of sand on the beach is vital to not only a meaningful life worth living, but is a necessity for a society of people to even exist. Because man, minus meaning for his existence, minus a certain hope for his

future even after he dies, turns into a despondent monster –“eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die.” We will plan to look more closely at this next week.

But you see the thing? Yes, we can know certain things about God by “reading” the things He has created. In that sense, I agree. The mountains are a kind of “Bible” or as we say, the Word of God. God speaking. God showing us Himself (revealing Himself is how the Bible puts it). The Apostle Paul wrote the very same thing –

Romans 1:19-20 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

What can be known about God from looking at and considering created things is this:

- God is Eternal. He had no beginning. He is not a creature.
- God is the Creator of all things
- God is incredibly and infinitely powerful. Nothing can frustrate His decree

- And perhaps most importantly, the creation tells us that *God is God and man is not.*

This you might say is a summation of “natural theology.” Things we can know about God, which God has shown to us, through His creation.

But something has gone seriously wrong. Paul says of all men who ever lived, who are alive now, and who will live – *they are without excuse.* Excuse for what? Read on –

Romans 1:21-25 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Now, listen very carefully. There are two fundamental problems with saying that *the mountains are my Bible.*

1. *What the sinful heart and mind of man does with that revelation.*
2. *What is NOT revealed in the creation.*

Consider the first problem. What does Romans chapter 1 say *that all human beings do by their very nature when they see this “creation Bible”?* Do they respond, “Wow! This universe did not just happen. That deer did not evolve over millions of years. No, there has to be a Creator and that Creator necessarily must be UN-created (eternal) with infinite power. The Creator must be God, and since He created me and all things, I owe him honor and worship and thanks.”

That is what is supposed to happen. But in reality what have every single one of us done before the Lord grabbed hold of us and opened our eyes and brought us to saving faith in Christ? What did we do? What do the vast majority of human beings still do today with the revelation of God in nature? Once again, the Apostle Paul tells us –

- Man knows full well that God necessarily exists and that God is the Creator
- Man knows that he owes thanksgiving and worship to God
- But man refuses to acknowledge God. In fact he exerts

tremendous energy moment by moment to “suppress/hold down” these truths.

- And in the place of the true God, man fashions his own gods. Man in other words is an idolater. He chooses to worship a cat or a bug or a snake, or himself, makes images of these things, sets up a religion revolving around his idol, and in the process becomes a fool.

And worse, there is something else that happens when man does this:

Romans 1:18-19 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

See it? *Man incurs the righteous and just wrath of God.* Here he is, knowing full well that God is God, but in his sin man refuses to bow to God, and in fact insists that he himself is god. Man then is justly condemned by his Creator. This is what the Bible means when it tells us –

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is

now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

What is to be done about this? Is there a remedy for sin? Because if there is not, then we would all remain under God’s righteous and just condemnation.

“But I’m not an idolater! I believe in God. I’m not some atheist. I don’t worship some statue in my home.” People voice these kinds of objections. “God would never send someone like me to hell.”

But consider this very carefully. When a person says they believe in God, when a person who says their “bible” is the mountains and that is where they meet God, and then *they go on to form a theology (statements about God) from their own mind, when they say such things as “God would never send me to hell” what are they really doing?* Here is the answer:

They are doing the very thing Paul is talking about here in his letter to the Romans. They are fashioning a god in their own image, according to their own imagination and liking. They do not say ‘I see from His creation that

God IS, and that He is the Creator and that He is God. Therefore I had better search and find out who He is and what else He has to say to me.”

No, what man does is fill in the blanks himself, according to his own likeness. He creates an idol god in his mind that does not condemn him, that is happy with who he is, and perhaps most importantly for such a man, a god who can be manipulated and used.

Largely, the vast majority of people – even of people who claim to be Christians – do this very thing. They refuse to acknowledge God to be who He really is and their religion becomes nothing more than a means to manipulate the god they have created for themselves. How you can use god to get rich. How you can manipulate god so he always says what you want to hear and gives you what you want. How we can have a god who will bless America even though as a nation we reject Him and refuse to worship and obey Him.

That is the first thing that is wrong with claiming that “the only Bible I need is the mountains.”

Here is the second –

The creation does not tell us how sinful man, alienated from God and

therefore from life, can be made right with God. The trees do not tell us how mortal human beings who are all going to die one day can find life in a new creation where sin has once and for all been eradicated.

Creation, you see, is just the starting place when it comes to knowing God and finding out what He has said to us.

Listen once again to our confession of faith on this –

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience, although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary to salvation.

Understand? Let’s put it this way –

- Natural theology, the creation as my “bible,” is sufficient to condemn us because it clearly shows us that God exists and tells us certain fundamental things about Him (which man the sinner universally rejects),
- But the mountains as my bible will NEVER be able to give me

God's own answer to this question, "What must I do to be set right with God?"

We must have more than the message of the creation. If we are to truly know God and find out what is true about ourselves, about our souls, about death and what comes after death, and if there is some way God points us to whereby we can be made right with Him, no longer objects of His wrath, *then God is going to have to show us these things. God is going to have to speak to us.*

And here is the beauty of it all – *God has spoken. God has indeed told us these things.* This is what this book we call the Bible is. Listen to the Bible make these very claims for itself –

Hebrews 1:1-2 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

God has spoken in the Old Testament (which is what is referred to here in verse 1) and God has spoken to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, as recorded for us in the New Testament (verse 2).

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but

through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

John 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men....
John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Listen to Peter again –

2 Peter 1:19-21 And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, (20) knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. (21) For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Here is the point. The Bible is either what it says that it is – the Word of God, God speaking to us, showing us His way of salvation from our sin through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ,

OR it is a really evil book because it is not what it claims to be. It is not just “the good book” as so many people like to call it. It is God’s Holy Book, God’s own authoritative book to which we had better give close attention and obedience, OR it is a pack of lies.

We have all been given a choice then. I can choose to create my own god, my own religion, my own doctrines that suit me. OR I can humble myself, recognize that God has shown me that He exists, that He is God, and that He has gone on to show me Himself by sending His Son into this world as the living Word of God, then recording His Word right here in the Bible for anyone who wants to know His truth.

It is an incredible thing. Right here in our hands we hold a book, written by God through human beings He inerrantly inspired, that points anyone who truly wants to hear how to be delivered from sin and death and set right with God.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"