

Rev. Anne J. Scalfaro
15 September 2024

10:30 a.m. MT Worship
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

Calvary Baptist Church
Denver, Colorado

“The Wonder and Word of the Lord” *Thriving in Goodness for Good and for GOOD*

NOTE: A sermon is a spoken word event. This manuscript served as a guide but is not exact to what was preached in the moment.

Psalm 19:1-6

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God,
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet 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,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his
wedding
canopy, 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 nothing is hid from its heat.

Visual Poetry

Earth as the Original Liturgy

theworkofthepeople.com

Christine Valters Paintner

Listen to how everything sings: the streams and stones, leaves and branches, fish and fur-covered ones, birds leading the chorus. See how your desire to praise is echoed in every living thing, how in quiet moments the heart is moved to gratitude for all of Creation, for the lavish abundance of it all, how nothing is earned, no achievements are needed. May you simply show up with breath, blood, and bones, and your loving attention to hymns erupting everywhere, until you can no longer tell where yours begin and nature's ends.¹

Earth as the Original Scriptures

theworkofthepeople.com

Christine Valters Paintner

May our eyes be opened to the Word of God scribed on every leaf and petal, on every wing and paw. As the seasons unfold in their vibrant dance of change may we hear the call from their pages to blossom forth, to bear fruit, to surrender and yield, to rest into mystery. Let the journey of caterpillar to moth teach you the path of transformation. Let the patience of mountains and singing of stones give guidance for what it means to endure. Let the rise and fall of the sun and moon circling the blue-tiled sky teach you about journeys to fullness and to rest and release. May Holy Wisdom be revealed in each season, reading grace at every turn.²

Earth as the Original Spiritual Directors

theworkofthepeople.com

Christine Valters Paintner

May everything in Creation become a catalyst for your self-understanding. Let the sacred whispers carried on the wind invite you to release what is not necessary, let the breezes help your wings to ascend, the sparrows to remember your flock. Let the divine fire that burns in your heart kindle you to deeper compassion, sunlight to seek illumination. Let the rivers and seas support you in allowing Spirit to flow through your life in new ways, embracing the rise and fall within you, let the pine cones contain an epiphany. Let the forest ask you to embrace your truth once again, and each smooth stone a revelation. Let the moon sing of quiet miracles, like those which reveal and conceal the world every day right before your eyes. May you make time to listen to the elements in their wisdom, revealing the Holy One's face and the sacred direction for your one precious life.³

Psalm 19:7-10

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

¹ Accessed on Sept. 15, 2024 at <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/earth-as-the-original-liturgy>.

² Accessed on Sept. 15, 2024 at <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/earth-as-the-original-scriptures>.

³ Accessed on Sept. 15, 2024 at <https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/earth-as-the-original-spiritual-directors>.

⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple;
⁸ the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear,

enlightening the eyes;
⁹ the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances 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.

Hymn 280

Speak, O Lord

written by Keith Getty / Stuart Townend

SPEAK, O LORD

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy Word
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

Teach us, Lord, full obedience
Holy reverence, true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity

Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of pow'r that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace, we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith, we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak, O Lord, 'til Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory

Psalm 19:11-14

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

¹ Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.
¹² But who can detect one's own errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.
¹³ Keep 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.
¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation
of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD,
my rock and my redeemer.

Silence

If you've ever wondered if God is still speaking, Psalm 19 says **YES!** Yes, God IS speaking—
1) through Creation, 2) through Scripture, *and* 3) through You and Me.

This threefold answer of how God speaks in our lives and world comes through the threefold movements of the psalm. Psalm means song, by the way. And songs, you could say, are poetry put to music.

We are to savor poetry, not plow through it. We are to sink into the songs of the psalter, not just have them on in our earbuds as “background noise” as we go about our day.

This is why we just experienced Psalm 19 in its three movements, offering you opportunities for deeper engagement in hopes that you had a moment to savor, sink into, and celebrate the gifts of Divine revelation and speech: Creation, Scripture, and Self-

reflection. These are all the “Words of the Lord,” and they begin and end with Wonder—with our ability to marvel at and meditate on what God is shouting in the universe, what God is saying in the text, and what God is whispering within our hearts.

The **first** part of the psalm **Reveals how the Speech of Nature proclaims the Glory of God.** Verses 1-6 invite us to enter the Cathedral of God’s Creation, and to take a seat, and stay a while. These verses **Center us** in God’s presence in the Beauty, Awe, Amazement of the **Created World.**

The **second** part of the psalm **Reveres the Truth that is Spoken through Scripture.** Verses 7-10 invite us to remember the laws, commandments, and stories in the Bible that invite us into healthy relationships, with God and others. These verses **Connect us** by highlighting the sweet teaching of God’s Word as we read and heed her wisdom in **Scripture.**

And the **third** and final part of the Psalm **Reorients us Inward to Reflect on our Actions, our Speech, and our Thoughts.** Prayer and meditation invite us

into self-reflection which strengthens outward action. Verses 11-14 **Center and Connect us** to our own journey, so that the **revelation of our Own Life** speaks the Good News of God’s love to the world.

- 1) We **Center** in the **Wonder of the Lord** through **Creation.**
- 2) And we **Connect** through the **Word of the Lord** in **Scripture.**
- 3) So that **Our Very Lives** become the **Newest Proclamation of Divine Speech.**

You can see already how our first pair of spiritual practices for this year—Center and Connect—are key touchstones for the Psalmist. Indeed, Psalm 19 is a masterclass in how we might become, more and more, a people who are “Thriving in Goodness for Good and for *Good.*”

Because you see, as the Psalmist emphasizes, , one sure way to miss what God is saying in the world and to miss out on how it might help you thrive is to limit God’s Word to mere words on a page.

This is why the Psalmist begins with the Wonder of Creation in the Cosmos, God's first revelatory speech and ongoing proclamation.⁴

Eugene Peterson paraphrases these first verses, writing:
 "God's glory is on tour in the skies,
 God's-craft on exhibit across the horizon.
 Madame Day holds classes every morning,
 Professor Night lectures each evening...
 Unspoken truth is spoken
 Everywhere...
 [For example:] The morning sun's a new
 husband leaping from his
 honeymoon bed [with exuberation],
 The daybreaking sun an
 [endurance] athlete
 racing to the tape.
 That's how God's Word vaults
 across the skies
 from sunrise to sunset...
 warming hearts to faith,"
 (Psalm 19:1-6, *The Message*).

Indeed, the sun's light and heat beaming and burning constantly and consistently day after day

after day...if *that* does not speak of God's faithfulness and ever-presence, then what does? Has there ever been a morning in your life when the sun did not rise?

The "word" of Creation is one of Wonder and Silence and yes, Sound too—a rippling river or whipping wind—but it is not "speech." As one scholar aptly notes, "*God's first word was creation; [and] creation, in turn, is a powerful witness to God's silence. By its sheer 'being-ness,' creation makes known God's glory.*"⁵

In other words, no humanly-devised language can say what Creation says. God speaks universal truths through Nature in a language that needs no translation, just our attention. Our noticing. Our amazement. Our centering. Or in the words of poet Mary Oliver from her poem *When Death Comes*, "all my life I want to say I lived married to the bridegroom of amazement."⁶

There is a Word being spoken in Nature about Compassion,

⁴ Carol J. Dempsey, OP, "Psalm 19: Exegetical Perspective," eds. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary Year B, Volume 4* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2009, pg 57.

⁵ Dempsey, 59.

⁶ Mary Oliver, *When Death Comes*, poem accessed on Sept. 15, 2024 at <https://www.loc.gov/programs/poetry-and-literature/poet-laureate/poet-laureate-projects/poetry-180/all-poems/item/poetry-180-102/when-death-comes/>.

Beauty, and Respect and
Reverence for Life that we
desperately need to hear.
And one wonders, if the whole
realm of nature constantly
proclaims God's glory in a
continuous pouring forth of
spiritual knowledge then what
are the spiritual ramifications of
living sequestered inside, away
from nature in front of screens?⁷

We know the ramifications. We
are more detached. More
distant. More dehumanizing of
one another. Yet, words of
healing and speech that soothes
is everywhere and all around us
in creation.

Have you ever been stuck in an
anxious thought cycle, worrying
about a problem or issue in your
life, and sat on a beach, and just
watched the waves lap over and
over again on the shoreline, the
ocean as far out as your eye can
see (a whole world under there!)
and all the sudden a feeling of
peace washes over you.
Calming you, almost
hypnotically in a trance of
stillness and centeredness, with
each lapping wave?

Or what about the times when
you felt a bit unsure, doubting

your confidence or gifts, but
then as you stand atop a
mountain looking out over the
landscape, felt an overwhelming
sense of the strength and
assurance of God's presence
with you—giving you courage?

Perhaps you've walked or
driven through the heat of the
desert, marveling at how cacti
survive with such limited water,
and you learn something about
storing up 'spiritual reserves' in
your life for those 'desert'
seasons.

Then there are those epiphany
moments when you've been
dealing with something that felt
like the biggest problem in the
world, but then looked up at the
stars at night, perhaps
somewhere far out of the city
without light pollution, and been
amazed at the vastness of the
universe and all the sudden felt
small and realized whatever you
are dealing with, in the grand
scheme of things, is not that big
after all?

Or perhaps it was when you felt
like you could not get out from
under some mistake or some
action that you regret, and then
watched the pouring rain

⁷ Ruth. Boling, "Psalm 19: Pastoral Perspective," eds.
David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, *Feasting
on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common*

Lectionary Year B, Volume 4 (Louisville, KY:
Westminster John Knox Press) 2009, pg 56.

outside, and upon the storm clouds breaking up and the sun shining through, and the greens and browns of nature just being a more vibrant shade of green, a more rich hue of brown after the rain...and thought of God's grace as that rain...pouring down on you, refreshing, renewing, reinvigorating?

Or maybe you live with depression or are alone and tired and exhausted, unseen or unheard, and then, your beloved pet curls up beside you, or insists on being fed, or brings you a toy to play—and you're reminded that you matter, a living being depends on you and you're reminded of the connectedness of all living things and the unspoken language of unconditional love?

Or perhaps it's the glorious gold, orange, pink, lavender, light blue, purple clouds of dusk—which we get so often here in Colorado—that makes you feel like heaven is literally breaking through right down to earth.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans: *"For what can be known about God is perfectly plain, for God has made it plain.*

Ever since God created the world God's everlasting power [and presence] is there for the mind to see in all the things that God has created," (Romans 1:20). Or as Richard Rohr explains in *The Universal Christ*: *"Creation is the First Bible, and it existed for 13.7 billion years before the second Bible was [ever] written!"*⁸

I thought about this quite a bit yesterday evening as I was sitting in the foothills—in the Cathedral of God's Creation—waiting for Minister Angela and Clay's wedding to begin, looking at the fall foliage and the changing colors. And I reflected upon how Trees are one of our first teachers about resurrection. There are seeds start the growing process (Birth), then the branches that grow with leaves (Life), then the leaves falling in the Autumn (Death), and then new leaves coming again in the Spring (Resurrection). Resurrection is not merely an Easter miracle; it is a seasonal Reality in Nature.

Indeed, we are enveloped in the pervasive, testimony of God in Creation. Poet Drew Jackson invites:

⁸ Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ* (New York: Convergent Books, 2019), 12.

*“Today, if you are still enough,
You will hear the world
Calling to you, saying,
Walk slowly and
Wonders may appear.”*⁹

If we **center** ourselves in nature, then we will learn that the Wonder of the Lord in Creation reveals Truth and speaks *as powerfully* as the Word of the Lord in Scripture.

Which bring us to the second part of this Psalm.

“If nature speaks generally of the Creator’s glory, the Scriptures speak specifically of a God of history who loves and calls us, one by one, into the beloved community of the faithful. God reveals Godself personally in the ‘Torah’—usually translated as ‘law’—but signifying in a larger sense God’s gracious will for humanity, which delights, inspires, and instructs those who take it to heart.”¹⁰

The Psalmist reveres the Truth that is Spoken through Scripture. While reading the Bible can be centering and contemplative, it is, at its most meaningful, **connective**. The parts of Scripture, or “The Word

of the Lord” that the Psalmist is lifting up in this song are the parts that are related to our connectedness to God and to others: laws, decrees, precepts, commandments, ordinances. They are more precious than gold; they are sweeter than honey!

Now I’m not sure any of us—if asked to describe rules or guidelines in our life—would do so with those same superlatives, would we? Rules, guidelines, principles, commandments—these things we tend to think of as necessary for living in an ordered society, but not necessarily as our favorite thing ever. And that’s because we often have a relationship of judgment or guilt to them. We think that if we do not do A, B, or C, then somehow God will not love us. Or, we think, if someone else does A, B, or C, then they are a bad person and deserve to be punished. We wield laws and commandments as weapons against one another and ourselves. Shame and guilt are powerful tools. But *they* are NOT the Word of the Lord.

The Words that God speaks through commandments and ordinances and the like that the

⁹ Posted on Drew Jackson’s Instagram page on Sept. 24, 2024: @d.jacksonpoetics.

¹⁰ Boling, pg 58, 60.

Psalmist is referring to here are words like “love your neighbor as yourself,” (Leviticus 19:18). They are relational instructions for living, not ordinances for obeying. They are invitations to live in right, just, and healthy relationships with each other.

For example if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, what does that mean if our neighbor is a stranger or a foreigner or immigrant?”

Hear what Torah—Scripture—says:

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you yourself were strangers in the land of Egypt,” (Deuteronomy 10:19).

“You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the foreigners who are in your land within your towns,” (Deuteronomy 24:14)

“The foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the foreigner as yourself...” (Leviticus 19:33-34).

“As for the assembly, there shall be for both you and the resident stranger or sojourner a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the foreigner shall be alike before the Lord. You and the foreigner who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance,” (Numbers 15:15-16).

In Numbers 35, the Lord instructs Moses to give cities of refuge to the Levites so that when the Israelites must flee into Canaan they may have cities of refuge given to them.¹¹ And in Deuteronomy 14 and 26 we learn that the practice of Tithing was begun for the benefit of resident aliens (as the biblical text says), or Newcomers, which is the language we might use today; those who have migrated or fled to our country from another. “At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who

¹¹ Summary found on Sept. 15, 2024 at https://www.ucc.org/justice_immigration_worship_biblical-references-to/.

have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who have come to live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied...”
(Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

There are countless verses that speak to the guidelines and decrees and commandments around welcoming the stranger, the foreigner, the refugee, the migrant, the One who Needs Welcoming. Not to speak of the entirety of the life and ministry of Jesus. Just in the Hebrew Bible alone, especially in the Torah, the first five books, of which the Psalmist is referring to in Psalm 19, there are dozens of “Words from the Lord” that speak—quite clearly—on how we are to honor and treat those who are from other countries in our country. Those from other lands in our land. And remember we are all, after all, most of us [if we are not indigenous ourselves], ‘those from other lands,’ in the land of the indigenous peoples of North America.

God’s speech is as clear as can be on the issue of welcoming the stranger. We are to do it.

With hospitality and equity and justice and generosity.

And oh do we need these sweet Words of the Lord this week. Words of Truth that speak loud and cut clear as a direct response to the racist, dehumanizing words that 67 million people heard in Tuesday night’s Presidential debate about Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio eating pets.

This is not a joke or a laughing matter. Words matter. Those demeaning people for political gain are wrong. Their words are not just wrong. Their words are not just hurtful. Their words are dangerous.

In Springfield this week, hospitals, schools, government buildings, and churches have been forced into lockdown and closure, the result of threats “linked to the false claims circulating among the far right that Haitian immigrants there are eating domestic pets and wildlife.”¹² All because of a social media post gone viral that is simply not true, and a Presidential campaign that is pushing this falsehood to quote

¹² Alicia Victoria Lozano and David K. Li, “Bomb threats force second consecutive day of school closures in Springfield, Ohio,” *NBC News* (Sept. 13, 2024), accessed on Sept. 15, 2024 at

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/bomb-threats-force-second-consecutive-day-school-closures-springfield-rcna171043>.

“highlight the consequences” of immigration.

Now there are lots of consequences of immigration—wonderful, difficult, and in between—and we can discuss immigration policy all day, but the Word of the Lord is clear for we who are people of faith: we are to treat foreigners with dignity, welcome, hospitality—as we treat our own citizens.

It is easy to see then, in this light, that for those who have immigrated to our country in recent years and who are scared and living in fear, those who are on the receiving end of hate from our leaders and the public that follows them...I can truly see the truth of what the Psalmist says...about how the laws and ordinances and commandments of the Lord are more desirable than fine gold, and sweeter than honey. In a world that spews lies, we are craving Truth. Truth is a balm in this culture.

And there are deeper gifts in the Word of the Lord as revered in Scripture. The psalmist says such words “revive the soul,” give “sureness” to the unsure, “make wise the simple,” “rejoice the heart,” “enlighten the eyes.”

Just as spending time in Nature is centering, spending time in Scripture is connective. The stories and words of the Lord in the Bible are meant to **connect us**—to God, to others, to ourselves. And yes, it is a fact that scripture gets taken out of context all the time, and the words can be used in damaging, hurtful ways, and I know many of you in this room live with trauma from Scripture being wielded as a weapon of hate against you. As a pastor I am deeply sorry that scripture has been used in that way, and I am sorry if I have ever used Scripture in that way. It is wrong.

Just as humans spread false lies on social media, humans can also interpret scripture falsely...knowingly and unknowingly. This is a fact. What is also True is that God’s Word is a Wealth of Wisdom and Healing and Hope and Love. When you read Scripture in its entirety—you find yourself immersed in a narrative of love, resilience, and hope. The laws of the Lord are meant to promote a kind of living that is full of love and honor and respect; a kind of living that connects us to one another.

It's not possible to reconcile being a person Claiming a Christian Faith while simultaneously dis-connecting from the needs, rights, dignity, and humanity of people. Just look at Jesus, the One who is the “Word (law) made Flesh.” And even more powerful than those ordinances and commandments from Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy telling us we MUST welcome the stranger, is the very Story and Lived Experience of our Savior—who, as a Jewish child born to an unwed mother in Palestine, found himself a refugee at age 2, fleeing state-sanctioned violence (i.e. Herod), and who was welcomed in a foreign land, given hospitality and allowed to live, which later allowed him to help others thrive.

The stories of Jesus and Zacchaeus (tax-collector) and Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well—these are stories that bring to life the commandments and ordinances which God speaks centuries earlier, in an enfleshed and embodied way.

Without a doubt, and as the Psalmist points out, the Word of the Lord in Scripture is meant to be connective...and it IS sweet.

“In Patricia Polacco’s *The Bee Tree*, a group of villagers drop their chores to dash through the countryside pursuing a honeybee to its tree, where all enjoy a taste of honey. Afterward, a grandfather spoons a dollop of honey onto the cover of a book and gives it to his granddaughter. “Taste,” he whispers. “There is such sweetness inside of a book, too...adventure, knowledge, and wisdom. But these things do not come easily. You have to pursue them...through the pages of a book!”¹³ Like honey, like gold, the wisdom of Torah is worth every effort to obtain it.”

For it teach us a way of being being in the world that holds God dear and people dear. And, it ultimately helps us translate our faith into action”¹⁴

Indeed, “as with the sun, there is nothing insignificant or optional about the law of the Lord.”¹⁵

¹³ Patricia Polacco, *The Bee Tree* (New York: Putnam & Grosset Group, 1993).

¹⁴ Boling, 60.

¹⁵ Susan B.W. Johnson, “Psalm 19: Theological Perspective,” eds. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown

Taylor, *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary Year B, Volume 4* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2009, pg 60.

Indeed, the stories of Scripture are sweet and life-giving and they revive the soul. And the more time we spend reading Scripture, and diving into the narrative arc of this text, and all the diverse authors and contexts and genres of literature—the sweeter it is.

Just as Centering in Creation can help you calm anxiety and give perspective, if you need to read something these days to help give you hope in the midst of the headlines, open your Bible. Read and read and read. God never gives up on God's people. And if you don't know where to start...think of your favorite verse or story in Scripture and start there. Read it over and over again. Every day this week. And see how it speaks a new word to you each day. Even though the words on the page never change, scripture speaks anew because each day we come to its pages anew; we are in a different place, ready to receive something different.

And unlike Creation which speaks for itself with no translation needed, the Psalmist admits, as he moves from the second section into the third, that Scripture does need translation, or interpretation.

And that comes through the filter of our lives, our wisdom, our experience. Here the psalmist is introspective and reflective, confessional even, acknowledging that what he has heard the Lord speaking in Creation and Scripture, he has not always honored in his life. He asks, "Who can detect one's own errors?"

We need to pause and reflect from time to time. Did you the important shift here? He moves from the Third Person to the First Person in these final verses, emphasizing that we must not only HEAR God speaking, we must LISTEN for what it means for *our* lives.

In other words, the Wonder and Word of the Lord, should influence the way we wonder about the world and should impact the very words *we* speak. When we meditate and reflect on what God is saying, we are more deeply connected to ourselves. And guess what—your life speaks the Word of the Lord into the world. Your life, your quirks, your beliefs, your doubts, your actions of love and thoughtfulness, justice and inclusion—they proclaim the Good News of God's Love to the World! Why? Because when you are centered in your own

Goodness and sense of self, you well connect your good to the Good of others, and you'll want to DO GOOD to make things better for others in tangible ways.

We've spent a lot of time reflecting on how Creation speaks and how Scripture speaks. How does *your life* speak? What is God saying through you? Your words, your actions, your thoughts?

Just as the Psalmist confesses and repents, we all need—as we see in verses 11-14—quiet times of prayer and meditation for us to center and connect with our own journeys and lives. What has been true and good about our actions and words this past week? What's been inauthentic or harmful?

The culmination of this reflection and re-orientation of time spent in prayer is this: *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer,”* (Psalm 19:14).

Combining an understanding of God from Creation (Rock) and from Scripture (Redeemer)—the psalmist teaches us how to use the revelation we've received to

connect us to God, ourselves, and one another as we authentically and honestly reflect on our actions, speech, and thoughts. For sure, this final verse could be a daily mantra or prayer, for *Thriving for Goodness for Good and for GOOD!*

Because can you imagine what the world would be like if each and every one of us prayed that our words and thoughts would be acceptable to God? Because if they are acceptable to God—they'll be acceptable to others. They'll reflect our goodness and they'll create more good in the world.

May we all use these three movements to help us thrive:

May we **center** in the Word of the Lord that comes to us **First** in the Wonder of Creation. May we **connect** more deeply to others through the Word of the Lord in Scripture, as taught in the Word (law) and embodied in The Word made **Flesh** (Jesus).

And, may we remember that as we center and connect in the Wonder and Word of the Lord of Creation and Scripture, we center and connect to our own journeys, meditating on our actions, speech, and thoughts,

and in that way, we become the
Word made **Fresh**, that is, we
become the Good and New and
Loving and Hopeful Speech that
the World needs right now.

Your Life IS Speaking to the
world each and every day.

So, For the Word of God made
First, (*all around us*)
For the Word of God made
Flesh, (*in Scripture and Jesus*)
For the Word of God made
Fresh... (*in you and in me*)

Thanks be to God!

Amen.