

“Out Through All The Earth”

Psalm 19:1-4; 14a

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Out Through All The Earth

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I.

I would like to begin this morning by using Psalm 19, today's scripture reading, to offer a brief refresher course on the two stated means of divine expression known as General Revelation and Special Revelation; which, together, are essential tenets of our Reformational Faith and Theology.

The word "revelation" simply refers to "revealing" or "unveiling." In Reformed Theology, revelation refers to God's *act* of communication to humanity or to the *content* of that communication. Or, more simply stated, revelation is the means by which God allows us to know God.

General Revelation is just that: general content revealed to a general audience. So, for example, today the Psalmist says, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork." Through General Revelation, which is available to *all* people, God communicates God's existence, God's power, and God's glory, such that no one is left without excuse.

II.

On the subject, one of the chief architects of our Reformed Theology, John Calvin, had this to say:

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretense of ignorance, God has implanted in all humans a certain understanding of God's divine majesty.

However magnificent and majestic, though, General Revelation is *not* sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of God's will, which is necessary unto salvation. From the Westminster Confession of Faith:

Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in diverse manners, to reveal Godself, and to declare God's will unto the church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary.

Stated more concisely, *General* Revelation leads us to the door of the divine. *Special* Revelation, in Christ as revealed through Scripture, is the key which unlocks the door.

III.

Pushing the metaphor a bit further, this morning, through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit loosed through the Sacrament of Baptism, that door has been opened wide to Lachlan Roan, and he has been joined with Christ and welcomed into Christ's body, the Church, as a member of the household and family of God.

Having reviewed the idea of General and Special Revelation, essential tenets of our Reformed Faith and Theology, I would now tempt you to blur the margin between orthodoxy and heresy (which is where the *real* fun begins!). After all, the whole notion of General and Special Revelation is but a human construct; a best effort, for sure, but in no way the final word (not yet, anyway). We are, after all, the church reformed, *always* reforming. So, let us endeavor to bring some reformation to our understanding of the means by which God allows us to know God.

IV.

Last Sunday, just prior to the start of the worship service, I had a momentary experience of spiritual ecstasy and revelation; which, I am able to see in hindsight, bridged the gap between General and Special Revelation. Not to be too bold, but it was right out of the playbooks of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Hildegarde of Bingen.

I was walking down the stairs from the Narthex to the foyer. Next to me, on the other side of the railing, Sean and Kristine were walking up; with Sean holding Lachlan. As we passed, I reached over and placed my hand on Lachlan's back, just an ephemeral and gentle gesture done without foresight or intended purpose other than to say without speech or words, "welcome little one." Though I continued to be aware of both time and space, I seemed to be no longer bound by either such that my past and Lachlan's future appeared to collapse into a single instant.

V.

In such a moment I realized that in just my one hand, which spanned his entire back, I beheld the fullness of his being: heart beating, lungs rising and falling, blood moving as a river of life moving gently through his warm and cozily clad little body. In that moment, I was graciously allowed to imagine all that his life might become; and the future that awaited him with his mother and father, as a family. All that he might do and experience, the wonders, the joys, the triumphs; but also the challenges, the sorrows, and the heart-aches. The full scope of the human experience lived out as a Child of God.

And, in that very same moment, I had a powerful recollection of holding each of my *own* children, and placing that same hand of mine on *their* little backs to rub, console, burp and behold the awe and astonishment they brought to my life, and would bring to the world.

VI.

In such a moment which, at once, looked far ahead into Lachlan's unfolding future, and stretched way back into my cherished past, I became aware of a miracle awakening within each of these children, within me, and within the midst of all of us.

We have gathered here today not only to *witness* a miracle but, moreover, to also *participate* in that miracle as it awakens in our midst. Lachlan Roan is a *miracle* baby. His journey to this world was long, arduous, and often in doubt. And, *yet*, here he is. A cherished gift to his parents, Kristin and Sean, who abided courageously in love and hope. A gift to his grandparents, Fred and Betty Rae, and Richard and Karyn, who gratefully receive a blessing of a future which, in all probability, they did not expect. And, a gift to this church and our congregation, for herein our faith is confirmed, and our future is to be found. Such a moment as this, is for *all* of us.

VII.

All we have in life are moments, which can only be lived one at a time. Moments we can miss, moments we can look past, *or* moments we can cherish fully. It is our choice born of free-will. Those moments, those choices, do not last forever, however, regardless of how exhausting, eternal or infernal they may seem at the time. One day you wake up and *POOF* they are gone.

Like what happened to me and Linda yesterday morning, when our son, Tucker, now 24, packed up his car and left at 7 a.m. to start a new life in Brooklyn (of all places); a life wholly his own and distinct from ours. (Says the preacher as he typed with teary eyes and a sniffly nose.)

The truth is, *every* baby is a miracle in our midst and, as a church, we play a delightful and vital role in the miracle's unfolding. Not only is each child a *gift* to us, every child is a *revelation* to us; a new way by which God allows us to know God if only we have ears to hear and the eyes to see.

VIII.

Sometimes, though, such a revelation feels to us to be almost too hard of a burden to bear, especially as parents, as we become overwhelmed by the realization of our responsibility for sustaining, nurturing and supporting this Child of God with whom we've been charged, because the unfolding of these little miracles can be a very rough ride at times, and absolutely exhausting at every turn; physically and psychologically in the early years, and even more so, emotionally, as those years fly by.

You go from the challenges of the sniffles, snotty noses, hoof and mouth disease, and pink eye, to the realization that yesterday your child spent his first night sleeping in NYC and, tomorrow, will start a new job as he begins to make his way in the world. It is enough to shiver anyone's timbers and, frankly, I have yet to meet a parent who has not experienced untold heartache and worry, as well as been afforded the occasional taste of abject terror.

IX.

It is in those moments, however few or many they may be, that we must remember the song, "He's Got The Whole World in His Hands." (First verse of the song to be song.)

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

General Revelation is not merely some kind of stepping stone which leads us to the doorstep of the Special Revelation of Christ revealed through scripture which unlocks the door to salvation and bids us enter. Instead, General Revelation serves to remind us that we have left the room; that we have allowed our fear and forgetfulness to chase us from our place in the household and family of God which has been so graciously given to us.

X.

Let us remind ourselves, the Reformationists were a stiff necked and very uptight people; John Calvin in particular. Yes, we take it be beyond controversy that within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, there is an awareness of divinity. But God has placed this awareness within us not to prevent us from taking refuge in ignorance, but so that we are reminded to return to the refuge that is Christ.

He's got the tiny little baby in his hand.

He's got you and me sister in his hand,

He's got you and me brother in his hand,

He's got the whole world in his hand.

These are the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts which are acceptable to the Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

XI.

Today, through the Sacrament of Baptism, in having gathered to sing, celebrate and worship, in proclaiming the Word, in supporting every child and their family, in swinging wide the door to all the Children of God and bidding them welcome, we join the heavens in telling the glory of God and the firmament in proclaiming God's handiwork.

Day to day we pour forth speech, and night to night we declare knowledge. And while, often, there may be no speech nor words, our voices surely go out through all the earth, and to the end of the world to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see (teary though they may sometimes be). Each one of us, as the child of God we have been uniquely created to be, is a gift to this world, and each one of us a revelation; a new way by which God allows Godself to be known. Generally speaking, that is pretty special. Amen.