

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 19

[Worship]

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. 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. 11 Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 But who can detect their 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.

Consider:

[Words]

James tells us to watch our tongue because it is "a whole wicked world" (James 3:6). Wisdom, that is, the Spirit, calls for our attention and warns those who mock others, and who hate knowledge of God's justice, that "they will have to eat the fruits of their own ways of life and choke themselves with their own scheming" (Proverbs 1:22, 31). The psalmist calls us to behave with integrity because we are here to worship God and the beauty of creation, which reveals God's creative power (Psalm 19:1).

However, it is the gospel that gives the strongest directive to all who would follow Christ—"renounce self" (Mark 8:34). Direct, almost brutal, it is the element of the gospel, apart from loving neighbors as ourselves, to which we are most resistant. Certainly the idea of renouncing self has led to oppression within the church of one group

over another, particularly men over women, and that is in itself a corruption of Jesus' intent. The "self" talked of here is the self that resists the invitation to inclusivity; refuses reconciliation, the practice of saving justice, and God's invitation to recreate the world (Psalm 19:4).

Self-renunciation is coupled with a mind-blowing activity to "take up the cross" (Mark 8:34). For most of us, the idea of judicial execution is chilling and unacceptable. The cross symbolized such a form of execution, firmly placing the victim of such punishment as someone from the wrong side of the tracks—which is not where most professing Christians come from.



Miguel D'Escoto of Nicaragua once observed, "I don't think we Christians have understood what carrying the cross means: the path of baptism. We are not carrying the cross when we are poor or sick, or suffering small everyday things. They are all part of life. The cross comes when we try to change things. That is how it came for Jesus." Let's get it straight!

Reflection and Action

Do you agree with Miguel D'Escoto's understanding of carrying the cross? Can you think of examples from your own or other people's lives that would bear this out?

[Scripture]

Mark 8. 31-38

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38

Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."