

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday, January 15, 2023, 10am
also on YouTube & Facebook Live Stream



Soul Myopia

Genesis 19:1-29

Coffee/Question:

“Let your faith be bigger than your fear.”
How do you do that?



03:00



Prayer

Last week we identified several things in Genesis 19 that have the potential to cause people, who are not in relationship with God... to be offended at... God... or offended by... God..

- Why would a "righteous" man offer his daughters to the men of Sodom to do with as they pleased?
- Why did God destroy the cities of the plain and annihilate the people who lived there?
- Why did God take Lot's wife's life?

These same questions also have impact upon the followers of Jesus. They can nuzzle their way into the mind and heart of a follower of Jesus and slowly eat away at their confidence in God.

So, as we study this chapter, my intent is to help grow your confidence in the person of God and his ways.

Satan whose name means slanderer works hard in our day and time to falsely accuse God of all manner of wrongdoing.

I also want to help equip you to be able to make a defense of your faith when people you encounter raise the kind of questions we've identified.

To that end here's what I hope to do today.

I want to lay the footings...



... and a foundation...



... upon which we can rightly understand... and explain why... God did what he did with Sodom and Gomorrah and its people.

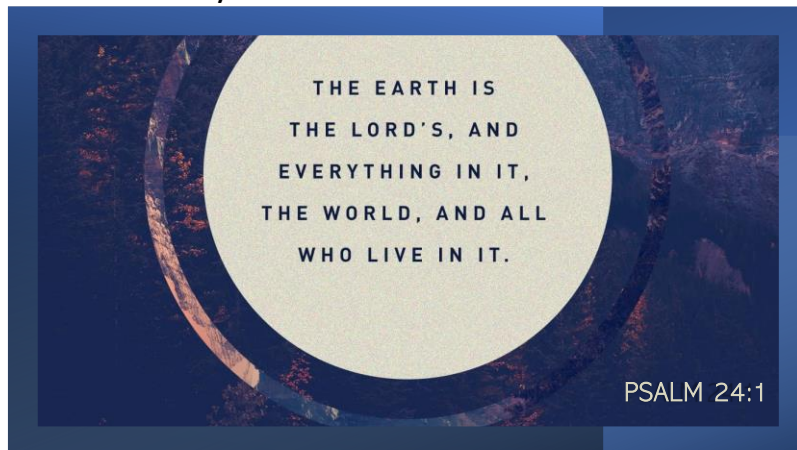
God has gloriously revealed himself... in the creation, in the Scriptures, and in the person of Jesus Christ... to be...

GOD...

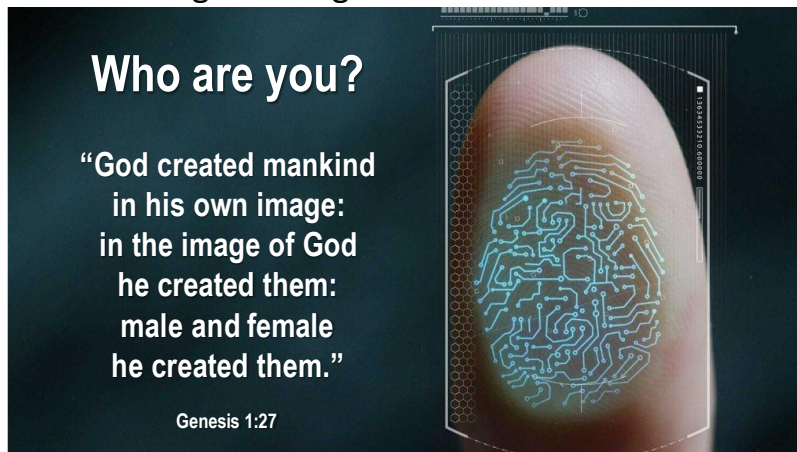
- is relational
- is holy
- is the Creator
- is verbal
- is the One who sustains everything
- is Sovereign
- is everywhere present
- is the Judge of all the earth
- is humanity's Savior

- relational ... God is triune – the Father, Son and Spirit live in fellowship with one another...
- holy – pure goodness there is no shadow, no darkness in him... he cannot be tempted by evil
- the Creator... his wisdom and power is so great... he spoke everything into existence...
- verbal –he utilizes language that humans understand to reveal himself
- the One who sustains everything – were he to stop doing so, the universe would collapse and cease to exist
- Sovereign – there is no one or anything... greater than him
- everywhere present – there is nowhere a person can go where God is not
- the Judge of all the earth – everything and everyone... is accountable to him for what they have thought, said and done... and the measure by which God judges is his own character
- our Rescuer – he came into the world... he gave his life in sacrifice in order to bring us back to himself

Psalms 24:1 says...



You and I live in God's world.
Our Creator made us in his own likeness.
Human beings are image-bearers.



We were created, male and female.... by the triune God - Father, Son and Spirit.
What does it mean to be an image bearer?

The Bible tells us that in the beginning God created human beings perfect.
God created human beings with the ability to rationally think.
He gave to us emotions.
We have the capacity to make choices.
He entrusted us with the responsibility to steward the creation and its creatures on his behalf.
He set eternity in our hearts so that we long for transcendence and significance.

Life as you and I now know it, is not what life was like in the beginning.

Why is that?

Because our first parents, on behalf of us all, chose... to live without God.

And the consequences of that long ago fateful choice, continue to be played out. The Bible is shockingly truthful when it tells humanity the truth regarding our spiritual condition.

We are utterly incapable of fixing what has been broken.

God's assessment of the human condition

- ☐ There is no one righteous
- ☐ There is no one who seeks God
- ☐ There is no one who does good

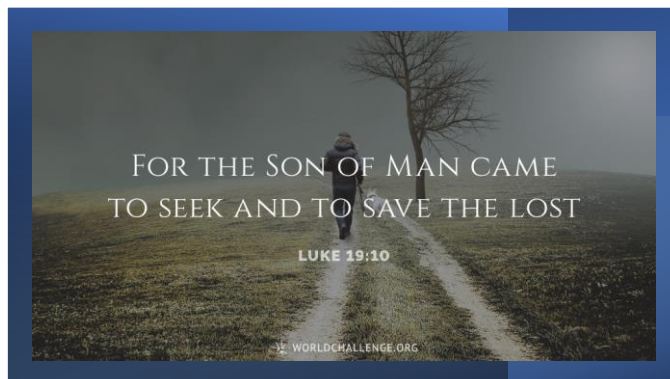
This is what makes God's promise to Eve so astounding. He said to the serpent in the presence of Eve... on the very day she sinned... that a descendant of the woman – would crush the head of the deceiver.

The promises of God across the centuries that followed increasingly revealed who this descendant of the woman... the Rescuer... would be. Through him God intended to reverse... all that sin and death ruined and through him to make all things new.

This is the story which the Bible tells.

This is the story that spans and unites the Old and the New Testament... the story of our Creator God who saves sinners.

Jesus himself said it so clear at the house of Zacchaeus.



When Jesus spoke these words at the home of Zacchaeus, he was not speaking of some of humanity, but of all.

We do not enter life innocent and became sinners.

We are not good people who occasionally do bad things.

We are sinful beings... who still do good, but not good, as God is good.

All of us are lost.

We enter life with a nature that has been radically invaded by sin.

What this means is that our lostness... our disconnect from God is not passive.

Romans 1:18 explains.

Romans 1:18
The wrath of God
is being revealed from heaven
against all the godlessness
and wickedness of people,
who suppress the truth
by their wickedness.

Sin resides within the human heart and finds expression in our words and actions. Sin is not something that comes into us, but something that comes out of us.

But God is so amazing... so gracious in his self-revelation – that the creation and the Word function... like a mirror, showing to human beings... the true condition of the human heart.

Why does God do this?

The first step to being rescued is to realize we need rescue.

Since Eden... humanity's natural response has been to suppress the truth.

We resist the idea that what's wrong with the world... is us.

Romans 1 goes on to say...

Romans 1:20

**For since the creation of the world
God's invisible qualities –
his eternal power and divine nature –
have been clearly seen,
being understood from what has been made,
so that people are without excuse.**

In what he has created God plainly reveals his invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature.

There is such clear evidence of God's person and his goodness and majesty that humanity is without excuse.

"Without excuse" in what way?

The heavens declare the glory of God.

The creation itself shouts out in non-verbal language the praises of their Creator. It is only humanity who is silent.

Romans 1:21

**For although they knew God,
they neither glorified him as God
nor gave thanks to him,
but their thinking became futile
and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

Romans 1:22-23 explains what happened when we dethroned God.

Romans 1:22-23
...[humanity] became fools
and exchanged
the glory of the immortal God
for images made to look like
a mortal human being
and birds and animals and reptiles.

Since the time of Adam and Eve, every generation of human beings turns away from the glory of God.

We repeat the folly of our first parents.

Collectively every one of us exchanges the most precious gift God gave to humanity – himself – and instead chooses to attach their affections to lesser things.

How could humanity do this?

Romans 1:25 explains.

Romans 1:25
They exchanged the truth about God
for a lie,
and worshiped
and served
created things
rather than the Creator...

Every person chooses the lie of the serpent over the truth of their Creator.

Before a person is ever able to run to the Savior and embrace him... the weight of this statement must settle on their hearts.

The Word must mirror to them what God sees when he looks at their heart.

Everyone of us has turned from the truth... we have all gone our own way.

It is this reality, similar to the father in the story of the prodigal son, that explains why God has given humanity over, that is, why he has let humanity go, 1:24,26...

Romans 1:24, 26

**Therefore, God gave them over (he let them go)
in the sinful desires of their hearts
to sexual impurity
for the degrading of their bodies with one another...
God gave them over (he let them go)
to shameful lusts.**

Why does God do this?

That human beings might experience the devastating consequences of their sin choices.

Until sin is bitter, Christ will never be sweet.

Being “let go” by God, results in a third tragic exchange.

Romans 1:26-27

**...the women exchanged
natural sexual relations
for unnatural ones.
In the same way,
the men also abandoned
natural relations with women
and were inflamed with lust
for one another.**

Released by God and left to their own means...human beings gravitate away from what God purposes to be natural... and are drawn toward and choose to do what is unnatural.

It is the tendency of humanity's nature which has been radically invaded by sin to flip good and bad... to call what is evil good, and what is good evil.

This “exchange”, this “abandonment” described in Romans 1... results in God further releasing humanity to go their own way... which confirms the utter folly of sin and the futility of all attempts to build a life without God.

Romans 1:29-32

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity... with envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. [They] became gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful. They became inventors of evil.

They disobeyed their parents, having no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

The assessment made by the Bible regarding the human condition and what constitutes the good life... is very different from what our culture embraces.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God tells us... that the human heart is deceitful and beyond cure. Jeremiah 17:9.

Do you see the dissonance between what God says about humanity and what our culture insists is true about the human condition?

The mantra of our culture is that one can find truth within themselves.... that a person will find satisfying purpose when they do what is right for them.

God disagrees.

We don't look within ourselves to find truth, we look up...

We look to our Creator... we look to our Lord Jesus who revealed himself to be... the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

Truth is not something that can be deconstructed and constructed according to an individual's whims.

Truth is the person of Jesus Christ.

Truth is constant and unchanging... because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

But every generation since that long ago day in Eden... when our first parents were exiled... have endeavored ... to create a narrative ... by which they attempt to explain their existence; and how a good life is to be lived... on their terms.

Here's another way we can describe it.



The narratives of our own culture are like a pair of glasses through which people look.



But all of the lenses utilized by our culture leave life out of focus. Not only do they not enable a person to live well in the here and now, they leave them utterly unprepared for the life that follows death.

I want to mention some lenses that people of our culture utilize. My list is by no means exhaustive.



- The lens of evolution – everything in the universe is the result of chance and long periods of time... there is no Creator

- The lens of relativism – there are no absolutes...
- The lens of “my truth” – truth and purpose are found within a person... what is true for you is true... and what is true for me is true... ultimately what that means is that there are 8 billion truths in the world
- The lens of transgenderism – this lens severs the link between a person’s inner self and their biological sex... this lens insists that a person can be in a wrong body, and when that is the case then the sex of the body must be chemically and surgically changed to align with the sex of a person’s inner self – this lens demands affirmation from all and forbids any questions or discussion
- The lens of sexuality – this lens view sex as recreational - if consensual, all sexual activity is acceptable
- The lens of race – this lens views racial discrimination by western culture as systemicand advocates for a radical cure - the dismantling of all structures which it has corrupted...
- The lens of climate change – insists that humanity’s current way of living is unsustainable; the proposed cure requires governments to enact radical, immediate changes... this lens purports that humanity is capable of fixing the earth – this lens like transgenderism... allows no room for discussion; to do so is to be labeled a climate change denier

As I thought upon these different lenses, I realized that you and I live in a time and a place.... similar to that of the book of Judges, 21:25, of which it was said, **“Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.”**

Everyone in that time lived by their own truth... and as you read the book of Judges you will quickly discover... this was not a good thing.

People in our culture and other cultures around the world... know that “something” is not quite right with people and the world...
...but as we’ve seen in Romans 1... it is in our human nature.... to deflect... to attribute that brokenness to something other... anything other... than the sin that has radically invaded the human heart.... and to reject God’s solution... faith in and submission to Jesus Christ.

These lenses that I just mentioned... focus on a reality that is like a mirage.



Each of these lenses offer to take humanity to a good place.
But rather than satisfying humanity's inner thirst... they utterly fail.
All of these things...



... and others... are no substitute for... they can never take the place of the triune God.... nor the purpose for which he created us.

Here we come back to God's story.

When a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, and is born of the Spirit, something remarkable, something miraculous... happens within them.

Rather than continuing as they had been doing, trying to find or create a story or find a lens that explains who they are and for what reason they exist...

...they now enter into the story of the triune God, seeing not only life here on the earth, but their own individual life.... through the lens of God's Person and Word.... which tells them who they are and for what purpose they exist.

Our own culture is desperate for truth, for purpose, for identity.
The angst with which people live is palpable.

And we, the people of God, who have been rescued by God... have good news to announce.... and that good news concerns Jesus, the Savior of the world.

As we come to Genesis 19, it is of the utmost importance... that we look at this chapter... not through the lenses which our culture uses to explain life.



These lenses tell an incomplete story.

These lenses promise what they cannot deliver.

These lenses take things which God intended for good and corrupt and ruin them.

These lenses leave people in their spiritually deadness.

So what are the followers of Jesus to do?

We are to live focused on our LORD Jesus.

We are to immerse our lives in Him and his Word.

Because Jesus has left us in the world, he would have us endeavor to understand what the people of our culture are saying... and why they are embracing what they are embracing to make sense of their life and to find purpose.

The grace and compassion of our Lord Jesus is to shape our interactions with those who have not yet come home to God.

We are called to be truth speakers as Jesus is.

But remember what John 1 says... Jesus was distinguished by grace and truth.



Remember the woman caught in adultery.
Jesus dealt with her in grace.
But he also spoke truth to her – go and sin no more.

We live in a period of time, and in a particular culture when the teachings of the Bible are largely unknown, misunderstood, condemned and dismissed.

Watkin, p.15

John Stott provides wise counsel to the people of God... as to how we are to engage with the people who live around us.
He says we are to practice double listening.
We are to listen to both the Word and the world.

We listen to **the Word** with humble reverence
anxious to understand it and resolved to believe and obey
what we have come to understand.

We listen to **the world** with critical alertness,
anxious to understand it too, and resolved
not necessarily to believe and obey it,
but to sympathize with it and to seek grace to discover
how the gospel relates to it.

John Stott, The Contemporary Christian, p.27

Christopher Watkin says this to the church –

It is not enough
for Christians
to explain the Bible
to our culture.
We must explain our culture
through the Bible.

Christopher Watkin

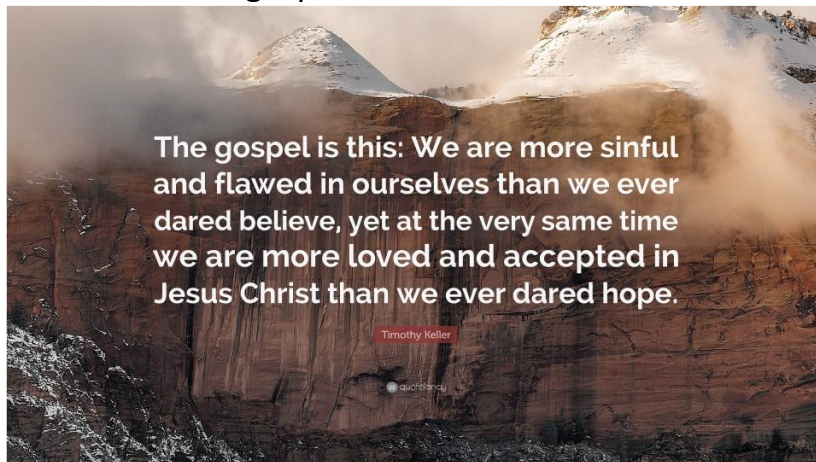
It is only the Bible in its entirety...

... Old and New Testaments...

... which explains and makes sense of... every aspect of life on the earth.

Read Romans 1:16-17.

This then is the gospel of God.



We are ready now, next week, to dig into the story of Genesis 19... to grapple with the glorious truth regarding the mercy of God's wrath.

As Jesus our Savior pursues the fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve... he raises in their minds troubling questions

- what if you are wrong?
- what if there is a Creator?
- what if sin is the cause of all brokenness?
- what if you can't fix yourself?
- What if collectively humanity can't fix the earth?
- what if the Creator of all... is the Judge of all the earth?
- what if you, along with everyone else will answer to him?
- what if God sent his Son into the world to rescue you and to bring you home to himself?
- what if there is life after death?
- What if what you do in this life determine your eternal destiny?
- what if God really will make all things new?

The ultimate measure of what is true, good and beautiful is found in the triune God who created all that is by simply speaking it into existence.

The triune God is the ultimate authority of what is true and good. Having made this world he will not leave it to be ruined and corrupted by sin and death.

God made human beings to be image-bearers, and though that image has been marred and twisted by sin, human beings, who are capable of great acts of good, are also capable of committing great acts of evil.

The explaining of why this is so... and the proposed cure... is at the heart of humanity's religions and critical theories... which all have this in common...

- Human beings can find their way home to and earn the favor of God
- Human beings can reform themselves
- Human beings can do enough good to cancel out their wrong
- Human beings can fix the failings of their culture and thrive
- Human beings can cure the earth
- Human beings can define their own truth and flourish by their own merit

But as any student of history knows, there is not one culture that has done this. Scan the horizon and all previous civilizations that once seemed as if they would endure forever, lie in ruins.

Humanity is cursed by the fatal flaw of sin that hijacks our best efforts and always results in death.

Why does God's holiness offend?

What do people resist the knowledge that He is the Judge of the earth?

gotquestions.org says...

Rebellion against God's authority was humanity's first sin (Genesis 3).

Our sinful natures do not want to bow to the authority of another, even God.

We want to be our own bosses.

Rebellion in the human heart is the root of all sin (Romans 3:23).

Genesis 19 will remain a story that offends... until life is seen through God's Word. And when it is... one will then perceive, not only the folly, but the devastating outcome of living without the triune God... and be brought to a place of awe at the great lengths to which the triune God has gone and continues to go in order to rescue us.