

Thought for the Day 10th July - John Reed

Read Psalm 19

In 2002 Richard Wiseman of the University of Hertfordshire set up a project called **LaughLab**. He set up a website on which he invited people to submit jokes, and vote for those they found most funny. Amongst other things, he discovered that men and women generally find different things funny; that Canadians apparently have the weakest sense of humour; and that Germans find more things funny than anyone else.

Now, humour is of course subjective, but the joke that got the most universal appreciation is one attributed to Spike Milligan:

Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy whips out his phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps, "My friend is dead! What can I do?" The operator says "Calm down. I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead." There is a silence, then a shot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says "OK, now what?"

A second, almost as popular, was this:

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson go camping and pitch their tent under the stars. During the night, Holmes wakes his companion and says: "Watson, look up and tell me what you see."

"I see millions and millions of stars, Holmes" exclaims Watson.

"And what do you deduce from that?"

Watson ponders for a minute. "Well, astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful, and that we are a small and insignificant part of the universe. What does it tell you, Holmes?"

"Watson, you idiot. Somebody stole our tent."

What conclusions do you come to when you look up at the night sky?

In Psalm 19:1-2, we are told: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."

Dr Watson was right to conclude theologically from the night sky that God is all-powerful and that we are a small and insignificant part of the universe.

But not everybody sees this truth. The apostle Paul, himself painfully aware of how easy it is to miss the truth, tells us:

"... what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 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 men are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20).

Fortunately, God has not simply left it to us to draw our own conclusions from the universe around us. He has also spoken to us through the prophets, and has come among us in the flesh, in the person of Jesus. As Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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 revealed himself and spoken to us clearly in many ways. And yet sometimes he must feel like Holmes talking to Watson, waiting for us to get the point!