

Speaking God

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[0 : 00] If you open up your Bibles, we're going to look at Psalm 19 this morning. That's going to be our reading, Psalm 19. There it is.

As I mentioned last Sunday, we're going to read the Psalm over two weeks. So last Sunday was really the first and this morning the second part of a little series.

And if you missed last week, unfortunately the sermon wasn't recorded. Although that will teach you for skipping church. But I'll do my best to catch you up on that first little bit of the Psalm.

And then we're going to look at really what is the thrust, the main point of the Psalm. From verses six to the end. But hear the word of God as it is written for us in Psalm 19.

For the director of music, a Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies proclaim the work of his hands.

[1 : 04] Day after day they pour forth speech. And night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no words. They use no speech. No sound is heard from them.

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth. Their words to the end of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.

Like a champion rejoicing to run his course. The sun rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuits to the other. And nothing is deprived of its warmth.

The law of the Lord is perfect. Refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy. Making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right.

Giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant. Giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord then is pure. Enduring forever.

[2 : 02] The decrees of the Lord are firm and all of them righteous. They are more precious than gold. Than much pure gold. They are sweeter than honey. Than honey from the honeycomb.

By them your servant is warned. In keeping them there is great reward. But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

And keep your servant also from willful sins. May they not rule over me. And then I will be blameless. Innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth. And this meditation of my heart. Be pleasing in your sight. Lord my rock. And my redeemer. This is the word of God.

Let's pray. Oh Lord with the psalmist this morning. I pray that you would cause. By your spirit. The words of my mouth.

[3 : 00] In this meditation. Both of my heart. And in this psalm. To be pleasing in your sight. To make much of Christ. And to move us all.

To a greater faith. And delight. And the assurance that comes. In the gospel. That we've sung of this morning. Professed to one another. Prayed.

And now. And now. Ask that we adhere it to. And do this work for us. By your spirit. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well the opening six verses.

Of Psalm 19. I think. Make a fairly straightforward point. And you can see it there. In verse one. In the heavens. Declare.

The glory. Of God. And then if you work quickly through the verses. And to really sum. The opening. Of this psalm up. The created world. The natural world.

[3 : 54] We're being told. Speaks. Of the creator. God. So in verse two. It pours out speech. It reveals knowledge. Verse three. Even though no words.

Are heard. Creation's voice. Goes out. Verse four. It's words. All the way. To the ends. Of the earth. And then the psalmist. Gives us this illustration.

Of the sun. In verse six. Subject to its creator. The sun. We're told. Rises at one end of the heavens. And makes its circuit. To the other. And nothing. Is deprived. Of its warmth. And so just like nothing. Is hidden. From the sun's warmth. Its heat. Everyone. The psalmist. Is writing. Everyone. Has heard. Creation's. Song. Everyone. Has heard. Its voice. Sung. In a thousand different notes. Or keys. In rhythms. And tunes. The created world.

[4 : 49] Glorifies. Its creator. The Lord. God. Just as a moving piece of music. We know. Has a composer. Or a songwriter. Or your favorite painting.

Has an artist. Your favorite piece of literature. An author. Films. Have screenwriters. And directors. So too. The world. Has its maker. The divine artist.

The natural world. Proclaims. His glory. And his goodness. And. As we thought about it last week. There are some obvious implications. To this. If it is. To be understood.

Primary among them. Is that. If there is a creator. If there is a God. Who made us. Then this gives meaning. And value. To human life. That isn't found.

In a world. Where there is. No God. See life isn't the result. Of time and chance. But the intentional. And deliberate. Attention. Of a creator's hand.

[5 : 44] Linked with that. Then. Our identity. Indeed. Knowing what it means. To be human. Is bound up. In knowing. The God. Who made us. And so you will never know. Who you are.

Apart from knowing. The one. Who made you. And then thirdly. Following from that. Human flourishing. Isn't tied. To autonomy. But rather.

Recognition. Of our God. And humility. Before the one. Who made us. Because we are always. The creature. And never the creator. And when we deny that. We damage ourselves.

And others. And so the Christian. Then is someone. Who joins in. With creation. In praising God. In glorifying him. But.

And this is where we get. To the rest of the psalm. That word. Isn't quite enough. That word. That is heard. To the creation. Doesn't tell. The whole story.

[6 : 41] It's inadequate. Actually. For really. Knowing. Knowing. The God. Behind. The creation. As the late. Pastor. From New York.

Timothy Keller. Wrote. Seems already mentioned. This morning. All people know. At some level. About God. And truth. Meaning. Wisdom. And beauty. Even if they suppress. That knowledge. As Paul writes. In Romans 1.

Nevertheless. Good. Nonverbal communication. Is easily. Misinterpreted. And so we need. Something. More.

We need. A better. Word. And that's really. What the second half. Of the psalm. Presents to us. This morning. As most of you know. I think. I am.

Not I think. I think most of you know. I have. A seven year old son. And most of you think. That he's. Just a darling. Right. Um. Just dying.

[7 : 36] To listen. To his mom and dad. Obedient. Um. Just a treasure really. And he is a treasure. Let me not say that. But you'd be wrong. About the listening part. A recent development.

In our home. Um. As. Uh. I've observed. Over the last few months. Has been a kind of. Of indirect. Uh. Communication. And.

And threat. So let me. Uh. Let me. Fast forward you. Or maybe rewind. Just go to Friday. Friday is. Is my son's. Uh. Movie. Day. Gets home from school.

Excitedly. Strips off his. His bag. Packs away his lunch stuff. In theory. Um. He does those things. Um. Tidies his room. And gets the lounge ready.

To watch a movie. We've. We've. We've discussed it. Normally during the week. You know. We've. We've. Uh. Surveyed. The. The sea. Of mediocre animated movies. That are out there.

[8 : 32] And we have chosen one of them. Settled on it. But as the afternoon. Uh. Develops. Um. To everyone's surprise. Teddy. Misbehaves.

And at some point. Uh. Lindsay. Or myself. Will sit down with him. And we'll say something like this. Teddy. Are you telling. Us. That you don't want to watch.

Your movie. And to this. Teddy will usually fire back. I didn't say that. I didn't say that at all. I didn't say anything like that. And we'll reply. Well. You aren't saying that.

But looking at how you are behaving. And what you're doing. It's sort of like you're. Communicating to us. That you don't want to watch your movie. And again.

With. With the obstinance. That perhaps only seven year olds possess. He will again say. I'm not saying that. I didn't. I never said anything. I didn't even say the word television.

[9 : 30] And this. I think. This silly. Little anecdote. Illustrates. What Timothy Keller says. In that quote. I read for you just now. That non. Verbal communication.

Is very easily. Misinterpreted. And so we need. Something more. We need. Something clearer. We need. A better. Word.

And Psalm 19. Agrees. So in verses. Six. To fourteen. The poet describes. This better. And more. Necessary word.

God's speech. Or. As he refers to it in the psalm. God's law. And we're going to look at it. Under two very brief points. This morning. And that is. We need a better word.

That is clear. And we need a better word. That is convicting. And so the better word. Firstly. Is clear. Secondly. It is convicting. Look at verse seven.

[10 : 25] The statutes. Of the Lord. Are trustworthy. They make wise. The simple. That is God's law. His word.

Instructs. Verse eight. It makes wise. It. It offers learning. And teaching. It directs. With clarity.

Verse eight. It gives light. Or. As some translations have.

It enlightens. As one Old Testament scholar writes. He says. The variety of terms. In. Used in the rest of the psalm. Show us. The practical purpose.

Of God's speech. Okay. That is God speaks. Through his word. And he speaks. So that people. Might respond. To it. With reverence.

With trust. And in. Obedience. This is the practical purpose. Of God's. Instruction. His clear speech. The clarity of God's word.

[11 : 21] Means that one. Can understand it. Of course. Without confusion. Perhaps. As one might. The created world. But more than that.

More than it's simply. Issuing truth. It issues. An invitation. To respond. To the speaker. And those who've answered. This invitation. That.

It then instructs them. In how they ought to live. Before God. And before. Their neighbor. But I want you to notice. Something else. That's going on. With this clear speech. In verses 7.

To 14. For they don't only. Lead. And enlighten. Instruct. And teach. And reveal truth. As much as they do all that. And it's good. No. Rather look. At verse 7.

The psalmist writes. That God's law. His speech. Refreshes. The soul. It gives joy. To the heart.

Verse 8. Or perhaps. In the most kind of. Exaggerated terms.

[12 : 16] In verse 10. They are more precious. Than gold. And sweeter than honey. More valuable. Than at the time. Was the most valuable. Material known. To man.

And sweeter. Than honey. And that sounds strange. You know. That instruction. That would be considered. And valued so highly.

Until you notice. Something else. In these verses. And that is. In verses 7 to 9. Of Psalm 19. God's. Covenant name. That is. God's personal name. His relational name. That he. Speaks to those. Who know him. Is found. No fewer than. Six times.

And a seventh. In the rest. Of the psalm. Now those. Among us here. Who can read Hebrew. Of which I think. There is only one. And that's Antonio. Welcome. Come. Could tell you.

[13 : 12] That in verses. One to six. And you can see this. In your English translation. God's. God appears there once. Okay. So God is mentioned once. In verse six. And yet. In the Hebrew. The name used there.

For simply. The Hebrew word. El. Or from. Which we get. The Hebrew word. Which may sound more familiar. To some of you. The word. Elohim. Okay. Which just means. God. In a kind of generic. And somewhat abstracted way.

And yet. From verses seven. To verse nine. We have. The name. Of the Lord. The Lord. The Lord. The Lord. The one. Who speaks. It is not that. He simply.

Sends out his truth. But God speaks. Through his word. And so he is the person. Whom one meets. When one encounters. His words.

And I think this is why. The psalmist. Speaks. The way he does. About the word. Being sweet. And rich. And satisfying. A delight. To the soul. Because through it.

[14 : 07] The psalmist. And us. Encounter. The God. Who speaks. Through. His word. John Calvin.

The 16th century reformer. Wrote this. He said. It has pleased God. To provide his word. For our sake. And so. We must strive.

Onwards. By this straight path. Not. So that we might simply know. What is true. But if we aspire. The pure. Contemplation. Of God.

If we wish. To know God. We need. A clear word. From him. We need. His speech. Left to ourselves. Or with the limited speech.

The non-verbal communication. Of creation. In verses one to six. We tend to invent God. Or gods. Lots of them. Or some vague concept. Of a force.

[15:02] That is at work. In the world. And usually this God. That we invent. And we can see this. The world around. And through history. Is a God designed. For us.

Rather than a God. Who rules. It's why so many people. Today have ended up. Describing themselves. As spiritual. But not religious. With some notion.

Again of a God. Who kind of. Sits in the background. And provides the odd pep talk. Or emotional. Motivational speech. When you need it to. But doesn't interfere.

With how you live. A God who doesn't have much to say. At all. About what you do. About how you spend your time. Your money. Your energy. Your attention.

We like this God. And so left to ourselves. This is the God. That we tend. To make up. So that we can have. A kind of. Smattering. Of divinity.

[15:59] Without any. Of the demands. That would follow. From a God. Who made us. More guardian angel. Less God. Less Lord.

And lawgiver. And more someone. Who simply exists. To give us a pat. On the shoulder. Psalm 19. Says that God speaks. And he speaks clearly.

And he stands behind his word. He doesn't simply give us truth. But by that truth that he speaks. Invites us to respond. To him.

To know him. To worship him. And to trust him. He addresses us. With clear speech. And this leads to the second.

Point. Is that this clear speech. When properly understood. God. Cannot but convict us. For God's word. Indeed God himself.

[16:53] By his spirit. Searches out. Our souls. As he speaks. To us. The late American pastor. And writer. Eugene Peterson. He put it so well. Like this. He said. The Bible's task.

Is to tell people. At the risk. Of their displeasure. The mystery of God. And the secrets. Of their own hearts. And these two things. Happen.

When we encounter God. Through his word. That he reveals himself. And as he reveals himself. Through his speech. He exposes. Our own hearts. Before him.

Now tied back to our first point. If God. Then never challenges. Or convicts you. Never says anything. In fact. To contradict you. The chances are. That you are worshipping.

A divinized projection. Of yourself. A domesticated. God. No God. At all. And you'll treat the Bible.

[17:53] Similarly then. It'll be another book. On the shelf. You know. Perhaps you pull it off. When you want to read. Something. When you need to pick me up. Perhaps. That if God speaks clearly.

And we encounter God. Through that speech. Well then that speech. Will convict us. Before him. Have a look. At verse 11. The psalmist says.

By your words. Your servant. Is warned. In keeping them. Then. There is. Great. Reward. But verse 12.

Who can discern. Their own errors. The psalmist. Making a remarkable observation here. That. That. The psalmist. Perhaps. Is unaware. Himself. Of his own sin.

Before God. And yet. As God speaks. Through his word. He says. That is laid bare. Before God. That's why he refers. To these. Hidden. Errors. That he is. Perhaps. Isn't even able.

[18:51] To discern. In its clarity. God's word. Is. Convicting. Precisely. Because of that. Clarity. We cannot be neutral.

Or indifferent. To God's speech. Or to God's word. In fact. We will probably end up. Responding in a few different ways. To silence it.

The same way we do. With the created world. To stuff it down. To ignore it. Or if we have. Probably understood it. With rejoicing. As the psalmist. Does.

But there's an important step. Before we get there. For as. The word. Reveals God. Or as God reveals himself. Through his speech. As he lays out clearly.

What he expects. Of those he has made. We are rendered. Accountable. To the one. Who speaks. If you'll forgive me.

[19 : 48] From quoting John Calvin again. He says this. In the word. God makes his will clear. If something. Pleases God. God. Well then the opposite. Displeases him.

If something. Displeases God. Well then the opposite. Will surely please him. If God commands something. Then he forbids. The opposite. And if God forbids something. Well then he enjoys. And expects. That we would do. The opposite again. God has clearly laid out. His will for us. As he speaks to us. And yet. As we encounter. That word. God. We see ourselves. Falling. Always on the wrong side. Of. Those little. Couplets. That Calvin says. That is. We don't do.

What pleases God. But rather. What pleases ourselves. Obedience. Is a pain. Because it costs us. What God commands.

[20 : 43] Feels like. Just too much. Of a burden. And we want to live. Our own way. And our own lives. And so as we read.

And encounter God. Through his word. We're held accountable. To him. And I think this is why. The psalmist experience. Of God's law. Is in some ways. Paradoxical.

Why he can say on one hand. Your law is a delight. And yet at the same time. This law. It meets the psalmist. And it confronts.

It frightens. It evokes. Another response. From him. Because in the scriptures. He hears from the God. Who made him. And he must. Recognize.

That he doesn't live. In the way. That God. Commands him to. Whether it's those things. That he is aware of. Verse 12. The willful sins.

[21 : 37] Or if it is simply. Those sins. That he is buried. Deep down. With inside of him. That he cannot even. Discern himself. The Hebrew. The Hebrew. Scholar. And poet himself.

Robert Alter. Sums this up. Perfectly. He says that. As the psalmist. Affirms the supreme value. Of God's commands. He is impelled.

To confess. That even. With the best. Of intentions. An imperfect. Human being. Can scarcely. Be sure. Of never having. Violated. Them.

Just as nothing. Is hidden. From the warmth. Of the sun. Verse 6. No part of us. Can be obscured. Or hidden. From God's. Searching. Word. This is exactly. How this psalm. I think is taken up. In Hebrews. Chapter 4. Listen to the writer.

[22 : 34] He says. The word of God. Is alive. And active. And we all love that part. The word of God. Is sharper. Than any double-edged sword. Little less. Loving for that part.

It penetrates. Even to dividing. The soul. And the spirit. The joint. And the marrow. God's word. Judges. The thoughts. And attitudes. Of our hearts.

Nothing. In the all. Of creation. Is hidden. From God's sight. Everything. Is uncovered. And laid bare. Before the eyes. Of him.

To whom. We must give. An account. The first. Pastor. I ever. Served. Alongside. A long time. Ago now. In Durban.

Was a man. Called Duane. He was. An incredibly. Gifted. Attorney. An advocate. Actually. A courtroom. Lawyer. And to this day. I. Often.

[23 : 32] Wonder. If I have met. A more intelligent. And quicker. And sharper man. Than him. Living in England. He went sailing.

In the Mediterranean. As I'm told. British people. Are. Tend to do. He went sailing. One summer. And after finishing. All the reading material. That he had taken along. He dug up.

And found a Bible. In the yacht. That they were on. He was. He would say. In his own words. Vaguely. Interested. At best. But certainly. Not searching. Not seeking.

Not wanting to find. Anything. In there. But rather. Just looking for something. To tide. Over. The time. Until he got back. To work. Being a lawyer.

And a brilliant one. At that. Someone said to him. Well why don't you read. The book. Of Romans. Book of Romans. Is known for. It's kind of tight. Rhetoric.

[24 : 28] And logic. It's very. Argumentative. Style. Style. And so. Duane. Never shy of a challenge. Said. Sure. You do it. And so.

He sat down. To read. The book of Romans. And before he got out. Of Romans 3. So three chapters. Into the book. He felt.

Incredibly. Convicted. When he used to retell. This story. His testimony. That it would become. And often with. Well. Certainly with more aplomb. Than I can muster.

He'd often remark. That as he read. This. Unaccompanied. Word. Of God. In the book of Romans. He realized.

That he would give account. To this God. He realized. That he couldn't argue. His way. Out. Of giving account. That if there is a God. Who made him. And gave.

[25 : 23] Him life. And if Duane looked at. How he had lived that life. And spent his time. Well then surely. He would answer. To God. And the verdict. That he would hear.

And as a man. Of law. A verdict. That he was so familiar with. He said. The verdict. Would have said. Guilty. Guilty. And yet.

Duane carried on reading. The book of Romans. He carried on reading. In Romans. Chapter 3. And found something. That the psalmist. Alludes to. For us here. Something. Else.

Another word. Have a look. At the end. Of verse 12. Where the psalmist. Not lacking. Of confidence. Can pray to God. Forgive.

My hidden. Faults. Or to use. One of Jesus. More famous. Parables. The tax collector. In Luke 18. Cries out to God. God. Have mercy.

[26 : 17] On me. A sinner. Forgive me. Be merciful. Be gracious. Friends. God's word. Is clear.

In its power. To convict. Psalm 19. Says that the creation. Speaks a word. Though. An incomplete one. It screams to us.

Declaring the existence. Of a creator God. The second half. Of the psalm. Says that God. Speaks to us. Perhaps. More quietly. With more clarity.

And confronts us. But that isn't God's last word. On the matter.

Turning again. To the New Testament. Book of Hebrews. You don't have to go there. But. In Hebrews chapter one. The writer says this. In the past. God spoke to our ancestors.

[27 : 15] Like this psalmist. Spoke to them. Through the prophets. At many times. And in various ways. But in these last days. He has spoken to us.

By his son. What does this mean? Towards the end. Of Hebrews. I think we're given. A bit of a clue. Listen to this.

From Hebrews. Chapter 12. Listen to the word. You have come to God. Hebrews 12 verse 23 says. You have come. To the judge.

Of all. Hebrews 4. The one to whom. We will give account. This is what we read. In Psalm 19. But the writer continues.

In verse 24. Listen to what he says. He says. You have come. To Jesus. The mediator. Of a new covenant. And you have come.

[28 : 14] To know. The blood. Sprinkled. That speaks. A better word. A better word. Than the blood. Of Abel. In Genesis.

Chapter 4. Abel was murdered. By his brother Cain. And his blood. Cries out. Guilty. Guilty. Before God. And in Hebrews.

Chapter 12. The writer wants us to say. That God's. Blood. Shed. In the person. Of Christ. The blood. Sprinkled. Of the new covenant. Speaks.

A better word. A very different word. That Jesus blood spilled. Poured out. At the cross. Is the giving of himself.

For those. Who when they would have to give account. Would be found guilty. Jesus. Is the one who suffers. The punishment. Of one. Who is guilty.

[29 : 13] Though he's innocent. And in doing so. Clears. People. Of their guilt. For God. The blood. Speaks. A better word. This.

Is. The better word. Better even. Than the word. That the psalmist. Refers to. In the second half. Of a psalm. Because that word. Is clear. That word. Convicts.

But Jesus blood. Comforts. It provides assurance. Have a look at how the psalmist ends. How he. Proclaims. And praises God.

Lord. My rock. And my redeemer. The psalmist doesn't end on a note. Of judgment. Or for fear of giving account.

To God. Because the psalmist. Knew. In a small way. What we can know. Through Christ. That he is a redeemer. For those who come to him.

[30 : 06] To those who hear his convicting word. And respond. In faith. And trust. Who don't hide away. From what the word reveals. But rather.

Come before God. And appeal to his grace. And so this morning. I must ask you. If you know. This God. If you have heard.

This word. And if you have responded. In the only way. That makes sense. To find. In God. A redeemer.

And a rock. We cannot truly know God. Apart from his speech. But Psalm 19. Tells us that when we hear that speech.

We realize that we cannot actually stand. Before God. Without Christ. Because God's words. Aren't only clear. They are.

[31 : 02] Convicting. And so we need that better word. Spoken by the blood. Of the son. And then. With the psalmist. And I think only then.

With the psalmist. Can we really cry out. As he does. Your words. Are more precious than gold. Than pure gold.

They are sweeter. Than honey. Sweeter. Than the honeycomb. Not because the word is only clear. Or only convicting. But because the word speaks.

Of a great hope. For people who are found guilty. Before God. Those who have received. This gracious assurance. This comfort of grace.

Then. Verse seven. Will heed the instruction. Of God's word. The law is still perfect. It does refresh. The soul. It is trustworthy.

[31 : 59] It can make wise. The simple. It is right. It does give joy. To the heart. God's commandments. Are still radiant. And they give light. To our eyes. And so.

The Christian life. Is at its sweetest. And most sure. And our hearts. Are at their fullest. And our lives. At their most fruitful. When God's clear voice. Is regularly heard.

When we look on God's world. And praise the creator. When we come before him. In his word. And are confronted.

By his law. And when we look. At the cross. And we hear the better word. Spoken there. That God. Is gracious. That God.

Loves. Us. And so. We turn to him. Again. And so. God's church. God's people. Throughout the ages.

[32 : 55] Have always been known. As the people. Of the book. Not because we venerate. Our Bibles. The Holy Bible. You know. It's printed on.

The front of them. But because. We desire to hear. From the one. Who speaks. Through it. And more than that. We want to meet.

Through those words. The Savior. Who sheds his blood. For us. Let's pray. Lord we.

Pray this morning. That. That you. Would work. Through the word. Read. Preached. In the way. That only you can.

By your spirit. To. To convict us. With the clarity. Of your word. But more than that Lord. To comfort us.

[33 : 58] By the better word. Spoken by Christ's blood. Help us this morning. Help us this week. To treasure your word. For the many.

Many ways. In which. It is a blessing. To us. But never forgetting. That it points to. That it. It celebrates.

And that it invites us. To see Christ. And to depend. Holy. On him. It's in him's name we pray. Amen.