

Amen.

Well, Austin already answered the question, who is that guy and what's he doing up there?

So I appreciate that, Austin.

If somebody would like a Bible, if somebody doesn't have a Bible, we do have some Bibles over here.

Just raise your hand.

So we will get started this morning.

Since I work full-time as a nurse and since I don't get up here very frequently, I think it's...

It's a little bit easier sometimes.

Most of the time we have the passage mapped out a year in advance about what we're covering.

So today, as I was looking at this, I was just thinking, Lord, what do you have for me?

So I just took some notes on something that God's been walking me through personally, and hopefully I can communicate that in a way that it's been impactful for me as well.

So

Where I want to start today is just thinking about the circumstances, the situations that shape us into the people we are, things we go through.

So I had a life-changing experience in college.

It was a near-death experience.

And I was dating Annie at the time.

We were in Branson, College of the Ozarks.

And

We were going halfway to visit Annie's family at Smithville Lake on the west side of the state, if you know where that's at.

And we were swimming, we're having a picnic out by the lake, and me and Annie's brother, Carl, had this idea, hey, there's this island over there.

Ordinarily, we wouldn't try to swim to it, because we know that's crazy, right?

But the water was down.

The water was down, so you could go out, you know, 100 yards from shore, it's still at waist level.

So the water was down pretty low.

And so we thought, we could probably do this.

And I think that's a cautionary thing when you start thinking, we can probably do this.

And so we started making our way.

We're like, all right, we're going to make our way to that island.

And we start working our way out.

It starts getting deeper and deeper.

And finally, it's up to about my chin.

And the bottom's really squishy, you know, lake water.

And you just swim for a while, then stand up and breathe.

All of a sudden, one time, I stand up, and there's no bottom underneath me.

And it was a very frightful thing when you don't have that bottom there anymore.

And I look behind, and we're about two-thirds of the way out.

We got a third to go to this island.

And I think, I panicked.

I'm like, let's just go for it.

You know, we're committed.

Let's go for it.

And about four milliseconds later, I realized that's not going to happen.

So I will be honest, it was not graceful.

I freaked out.

I became another person in that moment.

Because I tried resting on my back.

You know, they tell you if you're in trouble, float on your back.

Try to catch your breath.

And I was gasping for air at this point.

I was so exhausted from just the repeated swim, break, swim, break.

And every time I laid on my back, the water was choppy enough that it would splash me in the face.

So I'd have to roll over, cough out this water.

And it was just a miserable experience.

In that moment, I'm thinking, I'm going to die out here.

It was a certain thing for me.

I'm going to die out here.

And I started screaming, because I guess that's what I do whenever I think I'm dying.

And it hit me, is that going to help at all?

Like, they're going to be able to say, yeah, the bodies are out there located somewhere.

That's all the screaming is going to do to help.

It's not going to actually save anybody's life.

So I stopped that, and later Carl told me that...

He was also flipping out, but he was doing a little more gracefully than I was.

But he helped coach me, hey, let's slowly work our way back.

He was a little bit taller than me.

And so he would go down feeling for how far off the bottom was.

He actually helped whenever he could touch the bottom.

The water's probably this high above him.

He would push me up.

And so we worked together.

I say we worked together because I was panicking and he was not.

But we eventually made it back.

We made it back to the shoreline.

Praise God for that.

And I just remember sitting in silence after I got back.

And Annie came up like, hey, are you okay?

And I'm like, I don't even know how to explain to you what just happened.

And in that moment, like, now whenever I talk about it, I'm like, yeah, it makes sense that something like that would change you as a person.

Something like that

would be a defining moment.

But in the moment, I was thinking, even just afterward, I was thinking, what was that for?

Like, surely, I thought I was gone.

I wasn't.

What's the purpose in this?

And I think what I realized that I walked away with immediately after is maybe a newfound value for life, how fragile life is.

I had a new phobia of water.

So that was interesting to work through.

But as I was preparing for today, it made me think, as I thought back on that, what was it about some situation like that that either turns that experience into trauma that you just carry around with you all the time, or it turns it into thankfulness, or it turns it into something that's actually beneficial for you as a human?

And maybe you have experiences like that.

Maybe they're worse than that.

Maybe they're much smaller than that.

But I just want you to think about this morning.

Something, it could be small, it could be big, that you went through that had some impact on you.

And I want to dig into why did that have an impact on you.

Because in the moment, I probably was at like despair, shock, like,

what in the world just happened?

But now whenever I think about that, I think it, as I just, I was sitting in the library the other day thinking through this and I thought, wow, I was just driven to worship, driven to thankfulness that Carl was there.

Praise God for that.

I was driven to thankfulness, like all the things that I have been given, my wife, my children,

All the experiences I've had since then, I didn't deserve any of that.

And it just drove me to a heart of thankfulness and worshipping God for his goodness, even whenever I didn't deserve that.

So it made me think in, the disciples had probably a lot of situations like that.

But the picture I want to look at is in Mark chapter 4.

So if you want to turn there real quick, Mark chapter 4, verse 35.

And if you look before this, Jesus had been telling some parables, doing some teaching.

And then verse 35 starts, on that day when evening had come, he said to them, let us go across to the other side.

So Jesus has this idea, let's not forget that.

And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was, and other boats were with him.

And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

I just want to pause here for just a minute.

Jesus invited a bunch of fishermen who grew up on the water into a boat.

Storm starts.

But Jesus, he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

And they woke him and said to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea,

Peace, be still.

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

And he said to them, Why are you so afraid?

Have you still no faith?

And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

So they also had a near-death experience, or what they believed to be a near-death experience, right?

Jesus was still in control.

And

So Jesus had an idea, and it makes you wonder, you know, if one of the disciples said, hey, let's get in the boat, they're thinking about the boat as transportation.

They're not thinking about that as the setting of a prime teaching, a growing moment.

But Jesus had a bigger picture in mind, right?

And they said to him, don't you care that we're drowning?

Their eyes were so focused on the circumstances, so focused on the difficulty at hand, they're not thinking about anything deeper than that.

They're not thinking about eternal things at the moment.

And so the question in my mind was, okay, this sounds like a chicken or the egg situation.

Which came first?

Was it the storm or

that came first and Jesus capitalized on that?

Or did Jesus see the storm ahead of time and he willingly put them into it so that he can showcase something?

So we see that God has purposes and God has a vision already.

So the good thing is, I guess, in the moment, whenever they were scared, they actually went down

to go talk to Jesus in the bottom of the boat.

That's an interesting note there.

That they didn't just keep tirelessly working.

It's almost like, hey, we couldn't figure this out.

And God, we don't want to miss what you're doing here.

So can we get on the same page here?

And God...

God is doing good work through the circumstances.

It's often the case where we feel like the circumstances are distracting from what God's doing, right?

But God is doing good work.

He's not set back by those circumstances.

And I think if you look back on your life, you'd say, hey, if I didn't have all those things that happened, whether they be big or small,

If I didn't have all those things, I wouldn't be the person I am today.

So I probably wouldn't ask for it to happen again.

I wouldn't ask for something like that to happen this week or next month.

But it has benefited me.

I would say we all need shaping, life-shaping things to happen.

But even more, we need someone to open our eyes to what's actually happening in those moments.

We need someone to open our eyes to the value and the hope that's accessible in all those moments.

And I think, like I said, nobody's looking for those things to happen, but we are often looking for what's the purpose in smaller things?

Why does the line at the DMV have to be so long all the time?

Why does traffic have to be so reliably awful?

Why does there always have to be a construction site?

It's like we're asking the question, why as if there's a bigger purpose, and there is a bigger purpose.

I think creation shows us that, and even scripture tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God, like there is a deeper purpose.

And I would say our reminder today is that when our focus is on our circumstances, it's easy for life to feel full of frustrations, anxiety.

stress about what you're missing out on.

Like one that I think of is, hey, if I wasn't stuck in traffic, then I could be more productive.

If I had a shorter commute time, I could probably have more intentional time with my children.

You know what I mean?

Like we tend to have a lot of these things like, hey, this uncomfortable or this annoying thing came up and got in my way.

But this passage here shows us, and actually some of our own experiences show us, that a difficulty is not necessarily a speed bump.

It can actually be an enhancer.

So the question for you this morning is, what is holding you back from being changed, from gaining wisdom in every situation, whether it be big or small?

Wouldn't it be cool if you could...

You could be sitting in traffic, and you're like, wow, I'm such a better person because I sat in 270 traffic for an extra 30 minutes.

Praise the Lord.

You know, I think we would think differently.

You know, kind of like whenever I think back to that day on the lake, I'm thinking, sure, I would not ask for that.

I'm going to be making sure my children don't make foolish decisions like that, hopefully.

But that has impacted me in how I live my life, right?

So I don't know that I would change it.

I would rather learn it, you know, as we're cooking dinner.

I'd rather something a little less stress, right?

The truth is that there's hope all around us.

There's hope in every situation around us.

And we need something outside ourselves to open our eyes to what's actually going on, not the distraction that we're focusing on.

Otherwise, we're just experiencing life and we're missing out on the joy.

We're experiencing life, but we're missing out on the peace available.

Our main text I want to look at, we're kind of jumping around a little bit, but Psalm 19.

If you want to turn there, it'll be on the screen, Psalm 19.

And we're starting in verse 7.

Psalm 19 verse seven says, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

Let's pray.

God, we ask that you would make sense of this moment.

We pray, Lord, that this would be one of those life-changing moments.

Not that something crazy would happen, but Lord, that you would make something meaningful out of the mundane this morning.

I pray that you would speak to us, that you'd make it clear, in Jesus' name.

So, as we look at this, it's almost like a list.

And a quick summary of the law of the Lord is what revives the soul or what we think of as salvation.

The law of the Lord, think about each one of these words.

A lot of them are similar, but it's all aspects of or facets of the way we think about the Lord.

God himself, the law of the Lord revives the soul.

The testimony of the Lord, what God has to say, makes simple-minded people wise.

The precepts of the Lord rejoice the heart.

The commandment of the Lord opens the eyes.

The fear of the Lord endures forever.

And the rules of the Lord are righteous altogether.

And I think if we just look at the benefits on that, that sounds amazing, right?

There's nothing more valuable.

There's nothing sweeter.

The reviving of our soul, the gaining of wisdom, like that sounds great, right?

Do you really believe it?

And I think we're like, well, it's in the Bible, so I guess I believe it, right?

But I think if we dig into it, and as we do dig into it, I think we're going to find out that we don't actually really believe that, okay?

Because a lot of us are seeking the benefits that we see in this, in this list.

When we hear the saving of our soul, the gaining of wisdom, being filled with joy,

Seeing life with a renewed clarity, all with a deep reverence for God, we say, sign me up, right?

I want the gift while forgetting about the gift giver, right?

And if you think about it, you could probably ask any human on the planet.

They're looking for these same things, right?

They're looking for the gaining of wisdom.

Grab a podcast, right?

You want rejuvenation of the soul?

Take a vacation.

Take a pill.

You know, there's tons of things that the world is looking for this exact same thing.

And the world has answers for that.

But it's not hitting that spot.

And we tend to forget the first half of this that these are facets of God himself.

The way we relate to God himself.

Do you ever want something from maybe your spouse or your kids, but you don't actually want them?

That's me sometimes.

Can I get a little peace and quiet around here?

But I think that shows us where our heart is, that sometimes I just want the thing and I don't want relationship.

I don't want you around for this part.

Does that make sense?

We tend to see God like a vending machine.

And I want to say, yeah, I want those things.

I want wisdom.

I want peace.

I want joy.

But I think I found a better spot.

I think I found an easier spot to get that from.

For me, myself, I'll be honest, my dream ever since I was a kid is to own a business.

Okay?

I think it'd be a fun thing to tinker with

I think it would rejoice my heart, right?

I think I'd gain a lot of wisdom from being in the middle of it, right?

I think it'd give me a deep sense of purpose for my family, for the neighborhood around me.

So that's one example where I have found a thing that I really want

and have started to say, yeah, if I chase after that thing, if I finally attain that one thing, that's what's going to be perfect for my soul.

Right?

That's the thing that's going to make me wise.

That's the thing that's going to open the eyes of my heart to what really matters in life.

That's what's going to give me time with my family, because that's important, right?

And

I think if we're honest, each one of us has some variation of that in our mind.

Hey, if I could just get this kid out of the house, then there would be a lot more peace in my life.

Hey, I think if we could actually just make an extra 10 grand this year, then that's going to be what kind of pushes us into that perfect sweet spot.

We all have our hopes and dreams tied up in the next thing for us.

And so where do we fit God in with that box?

We fit the one true God.

We see him as a vending machine.

Like, hey, God, I'm not actually, I started that business, but actually there's been a lot of pain, difficulty.

It took a lot more time than I thought.

It's pulling me away from my family.

I'm fighting with my wife more than I ever have.

And it's like, hey, that thing actually didn't meet that thing.

God, can you relieve my stress?

Because I know I'm doing the right thing.

And it's like, I'm chasing my God, my little G God, while I'm also asking God to relieve my symptoms.

We start to see God as a vending machine that can relieve our symptoms of our lost, foolish endeavors, our joyless scrolling.

We think we're going to find it there too.

We fail to see the meaning in our daily life.

God has purpose even in the small things.

So this lists ways that we interact with God.

Laws, typically we think of a law as oppressive, but this is saying the law is actually reviving my soul.

The testimony of God, what God has to say actually makes me wise.

That's cool.

And it's specifically talking about, if you look at this, it's referring in the Bible to the actual spoken word of God, where Moses, David, others have actually heard from God and they're actually dictating it down for others.

And so that's the spoken, it's referencing the spoken word of God.

but it's pointing to what we know as Jesus, the living word of God.

John 1 tells us that we have access to a better word.

He tells us that the word of God that was back then actually was even before that created the planets.

That word of God was present when he spoke to the prophets.

That word of God, John 1 tells us, is the same word of God we find in Jesus.

And the same word of God that we have access to today.

That's why we don't worship this book, but we worship the one who is living in the pages of this book.

Okay?

And you think about what Jesus did with his life.

He spent time with others.

He cared for people's souls.

He cared for the person while addressing the eternal issues of the heart.

Okay?

He was actually out there.

He helped people fish.

Okay?

He worked with people.

He cooked meals.

He cried.

He taught people.

He played with kids.

He got angry.

He flipped tables over.

But he didn't miss his purpose.

He didn't miss the purpose he really had in life.

He never forgot that life had a bigger purpose than just enjoying it to the fullest.

And I think if we stop right now...

we might walk out of here with like a WWJD type message.

What would Jesus do?

I just need to remember what Jesus would do.

Would Jesus flip a table here or would he preach to people here?

No, that's not the message today because you can't be Jesus.

You're not Jesus.

You're not going to be perfect.

And Jesus didn't die for you so that you can try to act like him.

He

He changes people on the inside.

He's the one that opens their eyes to see what's important.

So the fact is, we don't need to act like Jesus.

We just need Jesus.

Okay?

So that's our message for us today, is that God is doing something in and through us.

The annoying little mundane things that get in our way...

the things that we get tired of, those are not speed bumps on our way to enlightenment.

God is actually working in those things to reveal things.

So the pain, the frustrations, the difficulty, those are not distractions.

And I would say the purpose of your life, the reason why you're on this planet is actually found in the middle of that diagnosis.

That purpose of your life is found sitting in traffic.

It's found in that near-death experience.

It's found in going to work.

And it's only Jesus that can open our eyes and make sense of all that.

And it's not like Jesus as some magical spell, some incantation.

We pronounce Jesus over our life.

It's an actual relationship.

You can experience life with Jesus,

He's the one who takes the foolish things of the world to dumbfound the wise.

He's the one who gives freely and doesn't hold back.

He's the one who's present and accessible in all circumstances.

And we find these promises that God's willing to give generously.

We find that God is accessible.

We find all of these promises in Scripture.

And what is our response?

Our response is to believe, to seek God, to just ask.

And that's the good news for us today is that we don't have to learn some cool tricks.

We don't have to learn some cool tips.

It's a new strategy for how to be a better person in life.

He doesn't give you directions to a better place.

He's present.

The better place is right there.

Salvation is present in your circumstances, not necessarily from them.

That's the hard thing for us to believe.

So seek.

Jeremiah 29, 13 says, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

And so when we look back at Psalm 19, we're like, okay, yeah, the reviving of my soul, the making wise, the rejoicing of my heart, the opening of my eyes.

That's all found in the work of God himself, not in the things that I want.

It's calling attention to the gift giver, not just the gift.

But my simple-minded heart is where I typically say, yeah, but I'm seeking a bigger house.

I'm seeking a more comfortable lifestyle.

I'm seeking a bigger paycheck.

I'm seeking more time with my kids.

And the truth is,

All those things that I think will scratch that itch, that will make my life better, all those things are actually going to end up worthless in the end.

And I know it's, I wish there was an easy, you know, we as humans, we want to try something.

We want to take a pill.

We want a workout plan.

We want whatever.

while also forgetting that Jesus just wants to be with us.

So our problem is that we don't really care about experiencing life with God.

Our problem is just that we want God to help us meet our goals, right?

So all these benefits that we see in Psalm 19 are tied to God himself.

So if we want those, those are only found in Jesus.

He's the only one that can bring meaning to our existence or some simple chore or a flat tire.

He's the one that can make meaning out of that.

All of life is worthless without hope found in a relationship with Jesus.

Imagine having a confidence about you knowing that there's no wasted flat tire.

God doesn't make mistakes.

God doesn't waste time.

He's intentional.

No matter what you're going through, whether it's traffic, illness, any kind of hiccup, Romans 8.28 says, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those that are called according to his purpose.

That means God is literally laying out a promise here that for his people,

He's going to take all things and work them together for good.

And if you're hearing this, that is available for you.

Hard to believe.

I would say it's impossible to believe without the work of the Holy Spirit opening our eyes.

Some of us are holding on to false hope that God's going to give us one day what we want.

He's going to give us that business that just...

We need bigger rakes to rake in all the cash we're bringing in, right?

We have false hope that God's going to give us what we want one day.

He's going to give us the bigger house, the bigger paycheck.

Maybe.

But one thing we know that he will give us if we seek is himself.

Matthew 7, verse 21, it shows us a picture of judgment here.

Jesus is teaching and he says, he's got a group of people there and he says, you know, many people are going to say to me on judgment day, Lord, didn't we cast out demons in your name?

Didn't we heal the sick in your name?

Didn't we do all these great things for you?

And he says, depart from me, you workers of iniquity.

I never knew you.

And I think that's the, that'd be the ultimate gut punch.

To think that you have provided God with some service.

You think that you've provided God with something.

He's happy with you because you did something cool for him.

And he says, I don't remember having a relationship with you.

And it's not like he's asking, oh, what's your name again?

Because God obviously knows everybody's name.

He's saying, I didn't have a relationship.

There was no personal relationship with that person.

I never knew you.

And you think about it, that's exactly what Jesus offered of himself.

During his time, we see in the Gospels where Jesus is present on the earth in physical form.

He's offering a relationship.

There was a relationship he had with people.

He had a different definition of wasted time.

So whenever this morning as we're thinking about what it means to actually seek God, what does it mean to actually be present with God?

I just want to leave you with a passage from Hebrews 11, verse 6.

It says, And without faith it is impossible to please him, him being God.

For whoever would draw near to God...

must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Those are the only two things.

Believe that God exists and believe that he rewards those who seek him.

And my question for you this morning is, do you believe?

Do you believe?

You might believe that God exists.

I think the thing that I struggle with, I struggle with believing that God actually rewards people who seek him.

Because I lose track of what I'm really seeking.

I'm seeking all the benefits of God, but typically I find my heart looking elsewhere for those things.

So my reminder this morning is just that God is present.

He's accessible.

He rewards those who seek him.

What does seeking him look like?

Well, seeking him can just be quiet, can just be reading scripture, can just be praying.

It doesn't have to look pretty.

It can just say, God, I don't know what you're doing with this.

Honestly, I felt like a hypocrite this week because as I'm going through this and God has actually been calling a lot of these things about his goodness and I'm going over this scripture to prepare for today, I also have a newborn in the house.

We had fevers rolling through last week.

And it's like, I just want this to be over.

I want the pain of this moment to be over.

I want to be able to enjoy the happy coos and the, you know what I mean?

Like, I want to enjoy the joy of it.

And I found myself getting frustrated thinking, man, this screaming child is really in the way of me worshiping God.

And it,

It's silly when you think about it that way because it's like, okay, well, like praising God, actually seeing like God put that screaming baby in my hands for that particular moment to call out my unbelief.

God is good like that.

I think it's almost like you're going to the doctor and if there's something in here, I want to know about it.

Don't hold it back, right?

It's not kind to hold back information from me when it has to do with my health.

So you're like, I want the doctor to tell me the hard news.

And the cool thing is God's on every side of that.

He cares about how it affects us.

I mentioned earlier that Jesus wept with people.

That always struck me when Jesus...

When Lazarus, his friend, died and he wept, I'm like, why is he crying?

Just raise him up.

It's back to normal, right?

But he's emotionally present in the moment, but he also holds the outcome in his hand.

He's like, I got this.

This is going to be cool.

Watch this.

Stick with me.

This is going to be cool.

Watch this.

And I think my heart gets tired of that sometimes.

And I'm like, I think I found a quicker way, God.

I think I found a quicker way to make that million dollar idea.

I think I found a quicker way, God.

And God is so good.

God is so patient to actually say, he pats me on the head, you're cute, buddy.

Let me show you what really matters in life.

That's amazing.

I think, I wish I could open the eyes of my kids like that and say, you're cute, honey.

Let me show you what really matters in life.

So we're praying that God opens their eyes.

But so I just want you to think about like, what do you think that's a setback?

The band's going to come up in just a minute, but

What do you think is a setback in life?

What do you think's annoying?

What do you think's in your way of praising God?

At the lake, I saw that foolish decision.

Don't go try to swim to an island unless you're like actually trained for it, I guess.

But I saw that as like, wow, I really could have messed things up.

I think I did mess things up.

But God turned that experience into a pillar of thankfulness.

into a pillar of worship that's solid.

That's something I can lean on as me.

In my experience, I'm like, wow.

God could have got rid of me and he would have been totally justified.

But he was patient with me.

And that's amazing.

So that's all I got.

I'm going to pray for us.

We're going to sing.

But I just want you...

Just spend this time as we sing.

Just spend this time.

It doesn't have to be pretty.

Reach out to God.

Seek God.

He will be found by you.

I promise you.

God, I thank you for your goodness.

I thank you that you are patient with us.

Showing us what actually matters in life.

And Lord, I'll confess that there's... I told one silly example yesterday.

for myself, but Lord, there's a whole list of things that I struggle with, thinking that I'm wasting my life.

I picked the wrong thing.

Lord, I just ask that you would make sense of all that.

I pray that you would take the mundane and just make it meaningful.

I pray, Lord, that you would

You would lead our conversations that it would not be just, oh, that was interesting, and we move on.

But Lord, I just pray that you would stir conversations this week, this afternoon.

I pray that you would speak to us, that it would...

be life-changing, that even something as normal, as routine, as mundane as showing up today, I pray, Lord, that you would cause that to be life-changing, that you would open our eyes, that we would see what actually matters in life.

I pray these things in Jesus' name.