

#### **Introduction:**

Today we are starting a new series titled "Culture of Grace," looking at the core values of the church. In this series we will consider what habits and practices, often called means of grace, that we want to prioritize and build the culture of GracePoint Church around. Means of grace are the things God calls us to pursue because they are the channels He uses to dispense His grace to us. So, we don't prioritize certain habits and practices simply because the Bible says we should, though that would be reason enough. We prioritize them because we understand they are the instruments God has chosen to use to pour out His grace on our lives. We will start by looking at 3 core values of the Word of God, prayer, and corporate worship, over the next few weeks, and revisit this series periodically throughout the year with other values. My hope is to build a culture in our church of pursuing these means of grace together, as we see God's in calling us to them. Today, our focus is the Word of God, considering how Psalm 19 calls us to be a people who know the power of God's word. C.S. Lewis called this psalm "the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world." Before we unpack it together, observe the way it begins and ends. Notice how it begins, "TO THE CHOIRMASTER, A PSALM OF DAVID." We often skip these parts of the psalms, but they are part of the original manuscripts. They identify the author and purpose of the psalm. We can easily identify the author, it is "A PSALM OF DAVID," but what I want us to see is its purpose. It says, "TO THE CHOIRMASTER." This psalm was given to the choirmaster for God's people to sing, showing us that the purpose was to have its words become our words. Now, consider the ending with me, in verse 14 "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." This concluding stanza points back to the thoughts and words of this Psalm, and asks God to examine them and say, "Yes, that is what I want you to believe and proclaim." And church, we need to recognize these thoughts and words are approved of by God, because, as 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, all scripture is breathed out by God. Through its inclusion in the Scriptures, and the intention of it being sung by all of God's people, God is calling us to believe and proclaim these things for ourselves. With this in mind, let's work our way through this psalm. Most divide it into two main sections. Verses 1-6 highlight God speaking through creation, and verses 7-14 highlight God speaking through Scripture. Look at the first section, in verses 1-6, that calls us to believe and proclaim,

#### **THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S GENERAL REVELATION THROUGH CREATION**

Start in verse 1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork." These are parallel lines communicating one truth. The heavens are not the heavenly realm, but the sky above. The stars, clouds, sun, and moon, everything we can see declares and proclaims God's glory through His creative work. Verse 2, then, builds off verse 1, "Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." Their proclamation of God's glory is like a spring constantly pouring out water, and this takes place day and night to reveal knowledge through what they communicate. Every day and every night speak to the one that follows to reveal knowledge of the glory of God they are proclaiming. The poetry continues to build in verses 3-4. Look there with me, "There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." This is showing how the heavens declaration of the glory of God resounds throughout all the earth, so no one can say they haven't heard its proclamation. All of this is poetically revealing that creation is designed to speak of God's glory to every corner of the earth. David, then, focuses in on the sun as an example, starting at the end of verse 4. Follow with me, "In them [the heavens] He has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy."

He is saying, look at the sun, and notice how it works perfectly to accomplish its intended goal. It comes out each day like a man leaving his tent on his wedding day, robed in splendor and full of joy, then continues on its course like a strong man who cannot be stopped. And verse 6 closes this section, “Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.” Everything can’t help but be impacted by the sun. It starts at one end of the sky above and moves to the other end with everything feeling its heat. Just like the sun accomplishes its goal, with nothing being hidden from its heat, all of creation proclaim the glory of God and its declaration is inescapable. Everyone and everything see the glory of God on display through creation. This is why, in Romans 1:19-20, Paul declares of humanity, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” The world is without excuse because the purpose of God’s general revelation through creation is to display His glory for everyone to see. Have you ever heard someone say they love going out into nature because they feel connected to a higher power? This is because all of creation attests to the glory of God and this psalm is calling us, as God’s children, to believe and proclaim that. Yet, we find that something more is needed for the hard hearts of humanity. This brings us to the next main section, in verses 7-14, that we will work through in 2 parts. First, verses 7-9, that call us to believe and proclaim,

### **THE POWER OF GOD’S SPECIAL REVELATION THROUGH HIS WORD**

Pay attention to the beginning of verse 7. David begins, “The law of the Lord.” Pause there for a moment, because there is an important shift we may not have noticed here. In verse 1, he used a generic term for God, when speaking of the glory of God. But here, and throughout verses 7-9, he uses the covenantal name of God, Yahweh, translated LORD, in all caps. I believe the goal is to draw attention to a more intimate and powerful revelation taking place. Some suggest David is referring only to God’s law because he begins with the term torah in verse 7. But, because this term is used often as a reference to the first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible, commonly referred to as the Law of Moses, and how Psalm 19 mirrors Psalm 119 with its use of synonymous names for the word of God, I am persuaded the intent is to point to all of God’s word. In verses 7-9, David points to God’s Word through 6 synonymous names to communicate the various ways it speaks to us. And, with each name, he shares with 6 adjectives describing its power and perfection. Consider the beauty of God’s Word in these verses with me. Look again at Verse 7, “The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.” First, the word or instruction of God is perfect. The idea is that it is complete and blameless. There is no error in it, or anything that it lacks. Because of its perfection, the Word refreshes and renews our souls back to where they belong. Continue in verse 7, “the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” Testimony points to the way the Word witnesses to truth. As we study the Word of God, we find it testifying truth to our hearts. And David says this witness is sure, it is trustworthy and dependable. Because of the surety of its witness, God’s Word gives wisdom to the naive. Next, in Verse 8, “the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.” Precepts refer to the rules or guidelines for living God provides in His Word. Contained within the pages of Scripture are guidelines for living that are always right, and never wrong. And they provide true joy to our hearts. This is so important for us to see, church. God knows the greatest good for our lives, and we will only find true joy as we live within His guidelines, because they are for our greatest good. Further, in verse 8, “the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The idea is that God’s commandments shine as completely fair and just. And, as they shine, they light up our eyes, providing understanding and direction to all who embrace them. Now, notice how verse 9 changes a little. Instead of continuing to describe what God’s Word does, David gives attributes of it. I believe this is designed to bring this section to a close. Look at Verse 9. He says, “the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.” Does it seem odd that the fear of the Lord is a synonym for the Word of God? It may seem strange at first glance, but Proverbs 1:29 and 2:5 show us how knowledge is found through the fear of the Lord.

So, this is probably pointing to the aspect of God's Word that teaches us to fear Him. This, David says is clean, or flawless in perfection, and it will never end, or change. The Word can always be counted on to do its work in the hearts of God's people, showing them who God is, and moving them to a holy fear and reverence of Him. Finally, verse 9, "the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." The rules of the Lord, or ordinances in some translations, are God's judicial decrees. The judgements God makes are always true, always fair and never unwarranted, therefore they are the perfect standard for righteousness and justice. Before we continue, take some time to reflect on the power of God's special revelation through His Word. This is why Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 to remember, "the sacred writings," he has been acquainted with since childhood, "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." And that, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," to equip God's people for every good work. Which leads us into our final verses to consider, verses 10-13, that call us to believe and proclaim,

### **THE VALUE OF GOD'S WORD FOR OUR LIVES**

David wants us to believe and proclaim the power of God's Word to our hearts, so we know and trust in its value for our lives. Notice how he focuses on the value of God's word in verses 10-11. Verse 10, compares it to precious commodities in the ancient world, "More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb." The Word of God is more valuable than the purest gold. If you held in your hand the purest carrot of gold you could fine, its value would pale in comparison to the Word of God. It is also sweeter than honey on our lips. God's word brings more delight to our appetites than the drippings of honey. What if you don't find honey that appealing? You could say it's more savory than the perfect prime rib or filet mignon. Well, unless you are vegetarian. If so, I apologize for my lack of understanding of what this might compare to for you. I only know what my meat loving heart enjoys. The point is God's Word is more valuable to the child of God than any earthly thing that tries to satisfy our appetites and pleasures. This is a theme that continues to come up in Scripture. Psalm 119, verses 72 and 103 repeats these same comparisons, and, in Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus calls us to pursue treasures in heaven, as opposed to wealth in this life. What this Psalm wants us to see is how we should treasure the Word of God because it is more valuable than anything this world can offer. Verse 11, then, shows why the Word is so valuable. Look there with me, "Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." The value of God's Word comes from its ability to warn the child of God and the great reward that comes from keeping it. Then, as the sun was an example of the heaven's proclamation, David's desire for sanctification serves as an example the Word's value in verses 12-13. He starts with a rhetorical question to make a statement in verse 12, "Who can discern his errors?" Oh church, we need to understand how hopeless we are in discerning our errors on our own. We need God's grace, through His word, to do this. So, David asks God for that grace. Continue in verse 12. David says, "Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me!" The cry here is for God to help him see and fight two kinds of sin. First, hidden sin. These are the sins we aren't even aware of committing, sometimes called sins of ignorance. The reward of keeping God's Word causes David to seek forgiveness for even he sins he doesn't realize he is committing. Secondly, he speaks of presumptuous sins. These are the sins we knowingly commit because, as John Piper suggests, "we presume to know better than God or presume that sin is no big deal." David knows the danger of his own heart to entertain sin, so he asks God to keep him from presuming he knows better and not let sin rule his life. Do you long for the grip of sin to be broken in these ways? If not, consider the conclusion to why David is requesting these things. Look at the end of verse 13, where he says, "Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression." Great transgression is willfully continuing in rebellion against God, denying His goodness and forgiveness. We should all long to be blameless and innocent of great transgression because we long for more of God Himself.

If you desire for sins grip to be broken like this, pay close attention to what this cry reveals to us. God's grace is what declares us innocent, and God's grace is there to help keep us from sin. God's grace isn't only for salvation, though we need that amazing grace. As Paul said to Timothy, the first thing the Word of God does is makes us wise for salvation. Through God's Word we discover salvation is only found in Jesus Christ. It is only through His blood shed on the cross that we can receive God's saving grace. And to receive that saving grace all are called to believe and trust in His atoning work alone as the payment for our sins. Yet, what we see here is how we live in complete dependence on God's grace. This is the connection to everything we have seen in this psalm. This Word is more precious than gold and honey because it warns us of the deception of our sin and points us to the great reward that comes from it, namely the reward of knowing God. And as we saw in verses 7-9, the Word of God is a precious, and powerful, means of grace that revives us, gives us wisdom, provides us with true joy, and enlightens our eyes for understanding. This is why the Word of God is a core value here at GracePoint Church, and it is a blessing to see it always has been. Yet, I want to encourage us to press into this means of grace more and more this year.

### **Conclusion:**

To help us press into this, let me end with 4 practical suggestions for ways to make the Word of God a priority in your own life. First,

#### **1) REMIND YOURSELF OFTEN OF THE POWER AND VALUE OF GOD'S WORD**

Have passages like Psalm 19, 2 Timothy 3, or Psalm 119, be a regular part of your personal study. When you find yourself struggling to commit time to study God's word, open to passages like these, read them, reflect on what they are saying, and ask God to give you a renewed understand of the power and value of His Word. Second,

#### **2) STUDY GOD'S WORD MOST OFTEN IN ITS FULL CONTEXT**

Do your times in God's Word feel dry? Are you feeling anemic in your faith? Could this be because your primary diet of the Word comes only from short devotionals, the verse of the day, or images posted to Facebook an Instagram? I am not saying these things don't have value for our lives, but if that is our only intake of God's Word, we are missing so much of its depth and beauty. Just think about all we would have missed if we only studied verse 14 of this psalm this morning. I don't want to downplay the power of every verse of Scripture, but God's design is for us to see more than 1 or 2 verses in isolation. Church, in His Word, God has given us thoughts that masterfully build on each other to communicate the fullness of His glory to our hearts. So, have your primary intake of God's Word be the study of it in its full context. Third,

#### **3) MEMORIZE GOD'S WORD FOR CONSTANT MEDITATION**

Biblical meditation is not the absence of thought but the saturation of thought on the truth of the Bible. As you study God's Word in its full context, choose 1 or 2 verses to memorize, and meditate on them throughout the week. As you do this, you will find the Word settling on your heart in a unique way. Let's go a step further. Consider even memorizing full sections, or chapters of scripture. I know that seems daunting at first, but how many of us have song lyrics or even movie lines memorized? Over the years, I have seen this practice be one of the most helpful tools for some of the constant battles that I face, like my battle with anxiety. During seasons of wrestling with anxiety, I have gone to these larger sections of Scripture and recite them to myself as my anxiety rises. And what I find is that this does exactly what Psalm 19 says the Word has the power to do. It revives me, helps me see clearly, and provides me with peace and joy as God becomes the focus of my mind. So, let me encourage you to memorize God's Word for constant meditation, and see it help you in your own battles. Finally,

#### **4) LOOK FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN GOD'S WORD**

In John 17, we see Jesus praying to the Father, and in that prayer, He shares a longing for His disciples to see His glory. And have you heard the story of Christ on the road to Emmaus at the end of Luke's gospel? In Luke 24, Christ appears to some of His disciples after His resurrection. As He is speaking to them, Luke tells us He showed them how all the Scriptures pointed to Himself. Listen to what the disciples later say to each other, in Luke 24:32, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" It was seeing Christ in the Scriptures that caused their hearts to burn within them. His glory is what satisfies our hearts, so look for the glory of Christ in God's Word as you study it. When you see His commands, see His glory in them as they rejoice your heart. When you see the call to fight against sin, know the reward of that fight is to see the glory of Christ more clearly. I am firmly convinced that God's Word will grow as a priority in our lives as we look for, and see, the glory of Christ in it. Church, I don't want you to hear all these things as simply things to do to be a better Christian. If that is what you walk away from today thinking, I have missed the mark this morning. What I long for you to know is the power and value of God's Word as a means, or channel, He uses to give you more and more of His grace. Let's have a culture here at GracePoint of knowing the power of God's Word and a dedication to pursuing God's grace through the study of it.

Would you stand as I pray this over us?