

Harris Creek Baptist Church
Nate Hilgenkamp
Series: Sticks & Stones
October 4, 2020

The Opportunity of Our Words
Colossians 4:2-6; Proverbs 17:28; Proverbs 18:2

Jonathan Pokluda: Amen, amen. He is great indeed. If you are a guest with us this morning, or this is one of your first times here, welcome home. We are so excited to share our home with you. If we haven't met, my name is Jonathan Pokluda, or JP. I have the privilege of serving on staff here at Harris Creek. If you are a guest, or this is one of your first times to be here, you're going to want to pull out your phone and text "HarrisCreek" to 97000.

We are rather paperless right now in this season of COVID so our bulletin, if you will, our Creek Connection comes to you by way of text message. So you can text "HarrisCreek" to 97000. I just have a few announcements for you. One is just our men's and women's equipping opportunity that starts this week.

So we have Sisterhood Topics. Tuesday night here is ladies' night at Harris Creek. You're going to want to go to harris creek.org/events and make sure you sign up for that. It is filling up quickly. It's just about filled up, and this is honestly your last opportunity to sign up. So also Base Camp that's Wednesday mornings at 6 a.m. Base Camp. This is for anyone college age and up. That's our men's ministry at 6 a.m. here starting on Wednesday mornings. Sign up at harris creek.org/events.

Another announcement is historically if you've been here a while, during Life Groups we would provide kids' ministry for you on Wednesdays and Sundays. Since COVID, we've pivoted from that. We haven't done that. I just want to communicate well with you. We will not offer that for the foreseeable future. As you know, we have limited space in kids' ministry right now even on Sundays and trying to figure out how to best pivot in this season.

So I just don't want any Life Groups out there thinking, "Well, we'll kind of start meeting again when they offer kids' ministry." No, no, no, no. Please meet, and let us know how we can help you do that. Because of where God has us geographically, we have hundreds of college students here who I'm sure would love to be adopted by your family and help you in that way.

We would love to brainstorm with you. You can reach out to us hello@harris creek.org if we can help you meet your kids' ministry needs in that season. Please do be meeting in your Life Groups. Next week, we're starting a series on Philippians where we'll be moving verse by verse through a book of the Bible.

It's one of my favorite books of the Bible, mainly because it's the one I've been reading. You can read that as well this week. So it's only four chapters. Just start reading with your family or with your roommate or whoever and begin to read the book of Philippians. Prepare your hearts and your minds for where we're headed as a church. So that's really fun.

The last announcement that I have is that this is my friend Joe Daly. Here's a picture of his family. He is joining our staff to help us in the area of operations. Joe joins us from Dallas. Joe and I worked together in Dallas for over six years and he is going to oversee our operations area here at Harris Creek. This is his wife of seven and a half years, Megan, and their boys, Will and Drew, 3 and 1, respectively. They're a really fun family. I'm excited to have Joe join our family here along with his family. So yeah, man. I'm excited to run with you.

Joe Daly: I'm excited to be here.

Jonathan: Yeah, do you mind closing us out in prayer?

Joe: I'd love to. Father, thank you for a beautiful day and the beautiful fall weather you've been giving us lately and a chance to gather as your church like folks all around the world have been doing for thousands of years. I know that my family is now excited to do it with this group of folks who have been doing it for well over a hundred years.

So thank you that by grace through faith in your Son Jesus we can be family with one another. You have your people all over the world getting after it, living for you. So as we continue to worship you now through the teaching of your Word, I pray that you would move in everyone's life this morning.

You are a God who is big enough to breathe the stars and the universe into existence, and yet you love us and are intimate with each and every one of us. You know right where we are. We can't wait to see what you're going to do as we continue to study your Word this morning. We love you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Nate Hilgenkamp: Well, some of you know this, but I'm not actually originally from Texas. I was born and raised in the second-best state in the United States of America, Minnesota. I love Minnesota, but I love Texas more. I tried to get here as fast I possibly could because I love the people of Texas. I love the food of Texas. I love the culture of Texas.

Eight years ago, I left Minnesota, and came to Texas. I learned some things about you guys. I love Texas, but I'm not really sure what you guys are taught in middle school and high school in regard to geography. It's confusing to me. Because I think all you ever really learn about is one state. There are 49 others! I think *this* is what you think a map of the United States looks like.

It's not. There is so much more than just this state. It hurts my feelings because as a member of another state, it's like you guys don't care about me. So here's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to start with a geography lesson. If you don't learn anything else, you're going to learn this one thing. So we're going to have a pop quiz.

The next slide is a map of the United States. That's an accurate representation of the United States. We have one rule in this geography lesson: no speaking. If you know the answer, you can't say the answer. If you have a question, you can't ask it. There's only one rule: no speaking.

Okay, one question. Which state is Minnesota? Which state is Minnesota? Which one is it? Minnesota.

Okay, it's *this* one. How many of you all got that one right? Yes. *That's Michigan!* I'm so sorry. You all are feeling such shame right now in church, but I've just been dealing with this my whole life. I come down here. I say I'm from Minnesota. No one knows where it is. *This* is Minnesota. Next one. For the rest of your life, you will always know where Minnesota is.

If you didn't learn anything else, that's what you learned this morning. See, there are some weird things about you all. You all don't know geography, but I learned that when I came down here, there are some weird things about me. Because I just spoke weird. I didn't even realize it, but when I came down here, everyone was like, "Man, you just sound weird."

Because Minnesotans have a long *O*. The mascot of the University of Minnesota is a golden gopher. I grew up cheering for them. So I came down here saying, "I love the Minnesota Golden Gophers." That's just what we sound like up north. We say boat weird. We're like, "Hey, you want to go for a ride on my boat? You want to float on my boat?"

We're practically Canadian, so we kind of sound like them too. The weirdest thing I said is I would call Dr. Pepper or Diet Coke or Pepsi, anything in that genre, *pop*. We called it pop, not soda pop, not soda. It's just weird, but I didn't know anything different until I came down here. The worst thing of all is that whenever I was talking to two or more people I would say, "You guys."

"Hey, you guys want to come over? You guys want to come do this?" Now I obviously say *y'all*. I don't care if it's not in the dictionary. I am all in. *Y'all* is the correct pronunciation of that word. It's the correct grammar. Because whenever I came down to Texas, I realized I had a few words that I had to figure out how to say correctly. Honestly, it's more funny than anything, but I think you guys have fixed me.

I mean, I think *y'all* have fixed me. I think you have. I'm maybe not there yet. Maybe I will be someday. But I think we have a bigger problem than this. I don't think we just need to figure out how to say a few words correctly. I think we need to learn how to say our entire vocabulary wisely. Because I think all of us when we were growing up, we were taught how to *say* words, but I'm not really sure we were ever taught how to speak them with wisdom.

I'm a pretty optimistic person, but this last week I've just been bummed. I know it's been going on for a while, but I've just been discouraged with the language of our country, the tone in which we speak and the words which we say. Something is off. It just feels like the Wild West out there. It feels like we're just reckless with what we say.

We're about seven weeks away from Thanksgiving. I'm already nervous about it. Anyone else here? I'm nervous about what that family member is going to say. I'm nervous about what I'm going to say in response. It just feels like we've lost any sort of grace and kindness and compassion with the words that we say. I think Proverbs 18:2 has a timely word for us. Solomon

wrote this in Proverbs 18:2. **"Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions."**

Man, that almost feels like a prophecy, doesn't it? I mean it's like he is speaking directly to today. Because if we pulled out my phone right now and we scrolled through Facebook, we scrolled through Twitter, all we'd see is people delighting in sharing their own opinions. But Scripture says that's foolish. So today, we don't just need to figure out how to say a few words correctly. We need a renovation of our speech. We need to fix *when* we say things, we need to fix *who* we speak to, and we need to fix *what* we say. In short, we just need to learn to speak with wisdom.

The more I think about it, the more I do want to have an accent with the words I say. Now I don't want to sound like I'm a Minnesotan, and I don't want to sound like I'm a Texan. I want to sound like I'm a citizen of heaven. I want to have a godly accent with my speech. What does that sound like? I think we're going to figure out today as we're in Colossians 4:2-6.

So open up your Bibles. We're going to be in the book of Colossians. In this section of Scripture, Paul is going to outline four characteristics of speech that honors God. In the first two weeks of this sermon series, we talked about the weight of our words and the danger of our words. We kind of talked about the ways that words can hurt people.

This week, we're going to talk about the opportunity of our words. Every single time we open our mouths, we have an opportunity to honor God. Paul is going to outline for us what those opportunities are in this passage. As you're turning to Colossians, chapter 4, just some background on this book.

Paul is writing the book of Colossians as he is sitting in jail. He is writing to the church in Colossae. As he is wrapping up this letter, the final instructions he wants to leave to this church, the last thing he wants them to take home is this instruction, and it's about their words. Here's how he's about to wrap up his book. Starting in verse 2, Paul says this.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should." Okay, so what does *that* say about our speech? What do those three verses say about what we should say?

I think it says that we should be speaking to God a lot. First, if we want to honor God with our speech, *we have to talk to God*. That's what Paul says over and over again in these three verses. Three verses, and he says it three different times. You need to pray. You need to talk to God. He is saying the thing you should be the most devoted to with your words is that you would speak to God.

In fact, let's just read it one other way because I think whenever we hear that word *prayer* it just kind of bounces off our ears. I think we're so used to it. Let's just read it a little bit differently so it really sinks home on what we're supposed to do with our speech. This is what Paul says in Colossians 4:2-4. He says this.

"Devote yourselves to [talking to God], being watchful and thankful. And [talk to God] for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. [Talk to God] that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should."
So Paul says this over and over again three times. Talk to God, talk to God, talk to God.

All throughout your day, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed, you should be talking with God. Here's what's important and the reason he emphasizes this so much. He has to emphasize prayer, because if you don't emphasize prayer, you won't ever utilize prayer. Do you ever notice that? If you're not devoted to talking to God, you will never speak to God.

I do struggle with prayer. I'm not prone to prayer. I'm a pastor. I don't know how you average Christians do this. This is hard, man. It's hard because I'm not *prone* to talk to God. What I'm prone to do each and every day is to get in my car and plug in my phone and listen to a podcast on the NFL or NBA or just listen to music. I'm prone to fill my day with noise. I am.

What I'm not prone to do is to get in my car and sit in the silence as I drive to work and talk to God. I feel uncomfortable in those moments. I don't like the silence. I think this is why Paul says you have to devote yourself to it. You have to devote yourself to creating space in the morning, to create space as you're driving to work, as you're driving to school, to talk to God.

Because if you don't devote yourself to it, it simply will not happen. I've never met anyone who has just fallen into an effective prayer life. I've never met anyone who it just kind of fell into their lap. The only way you can develop an effective and deep and intimate prayer life is if you work at it.

Have any of you tried to learn a language? In middle school and high school, I took Spanish, and I hated it. I hated it because I was horrible at it. To make things worse, I took it with one of my very best friends. We thought it'd be a fun experiment, but it was not, because my best friend Andrew, his parents happened to be missionaries in Spain for a few years before he was born.

So this made my life miserable because every single night during Spanish class, he would go home. He would go home, and they would just speak in Spanish to one another. They made a game of it. They would make Spanish food at the dinner table, and then they would just be talking to each other. Do you know what happened?

He learned Spanish because he was immersed in it, because he talked about it all the time. Then to make things horrible for me, he would show up to class, and he'd just laugh at me. Because I never figured out how to roll my *R*'s. I still can't do that. I don't know how you people can. Whenever I would be called on in class, I never used the correct verb tense.

He thought it was the funniest thing ever, but I was so frustrated because it wasn't fair! He spoke Spanish every single day. I spoke Spanish Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for 50 minutes. Of course I'm not going to learn Spanish! Of course not! I think the way you learn a language is similar to the way you learn the language of prayer. You have to immerse yourself in it.

You have to be devoted to it, just like Paul says. Every single day, you have to push yourself to pray. The more you do it, the more you'll get the hang of it, especially early on. You'll be talking to God. You'll be stumbling over your words. You'll feel awkward, and it'll feel weird. But the more you do it, the more you understand it.

I think it is really the primary use of our words. The primary use of your words every single day shouldn't be to talk to everyone else. It should be talking to your God. The first point, if you want to honor God with your words, is to talk to God. Let's see what else this passage has to say about our speech. We're actually not going to move beyond these verses.

Because I think if we read these verses in a different light, we'll read something else that it says about our speech. Let's read these two verses again in a different light. Verses 2 and 3. "**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message...**" Okay, let's stop right there real quick. "**...for our message...**"

You know, everyone has a message. As I was reading this passage with JP this week, we were talking about it. We were like, "Man, I think everyone has a message." You have a message. I have a message. We all have a message. Your message is that which you talk about the most. Whenever people think of you, what do they think about?

Because your message is the thing that at your funeral, people will stand around, and they'll talk about your message. They'll talk about what you talked about. What is it for you? For you, when they stand around and your funeral, will it be, "Man, he just hated Trump. He talked about that all the time. It was all on his social media. That's all I really know about him. That was his message."

Or maybe for you, it's, "She loved Baylor football. She went to all the games. She knew all the players. She loved Baylor football. She just talked about it, talked about it, talked about it." Maybe for you, it's going to be, "Man, he loves money. He couldn't help but talk about money. He never felt like he had *enough* money. He was always stressed by money. He was always talking about the stock market and his 401(k), and all he really cared about was his money."

Harris Creek, what's your message? What's the thing that people think about when they think about you? Let's see what it is for Paul. He continues by saying *this* in this passage. "**And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message...**" Here it is. "**...so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.**" You see, his message was the mystery of Christ. His message was Jesus, that Jesus died, and then rose again. That's his message.

Secondly, if you want to honor God with the words that you say, *talk about God*. Don't just talk to God. Talk *about* God. I think those are the two most important things we could do with our speech: talking *to* God and then talking *about* God. How are you doing with that? I don't know if this is helpful for you, but this was helpful for me this week as I was thinking about it. If your words of this last week were printed out into a transcript...

If everything you said from last Sunday until this moment right now was printed out in a transcript and was stapled together in a packet... Let's say we gave that packet to a person who didn't know you. They don't know that you're from Waco. They don't know you go to Baylor. They don't know that you're a member of Harris Creek. They don't know anything about you. If all they knew about you were the words that you said from this last week, how long would it take for them to realize that you love Jesus?

At any point, as they're reading these words that you said this last week, would they ever read the gospel? Would they ever read about that time where you were sharing your faith with that waitress at Chuy's? Would they ever read about that time where you were talking to your coworker who is without hope right now?

You know they're struggling, and you got to speak words of life into them, and say, "Hey, I've been there before. I've been without hope, but then I met Jesus and he gave me a hope and future. When I thought I was dead, he gave me life." Will they read about that? Or as they read your words from this past week, will they read about you speaking to your kids about how Jesus saved you from yourself?

Jesus saved you from that sin. Jesus carried you through that season. Is that what they would read as they read your words? Or would your words simply be all about sports, all about politics, all about the debate, all about your kids? What would your message be? I think if my words were printed out from this last week, you'd know a lot about Baylor football. You'd know a lot about the debate. You'd know about the stock market.

Those are the things that I like to talk about, but I don't want that to be true of me. I want to spend my time speaking about Jesus. That he brought me from death to life. That he gave me a hope and future. Because that's the most important thing we could ever talk about. That's the only thing that matters. I think we at least have to ask ourselves *why* we don't talk about it.

Is it because we don't believe it? If we believe that *all* this is true, that the gospel is true, that there is a dead man who came back to life and it affected our life now and forevermore, if we believe that, I think we would talk about it. So I can't answer it for you, but do you believe it? Do your words prove that you believe it? Because I think if we did, we would talk about it.

We'd talk about it out of our excitement, and because we want to honor God. So, if you want to honor God with your speech, talk about God. But the passage doesn't end there. Paul continues again in verse 5. He says this. "**Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.**" "**Be wise in the way you act...**" Be wise in the way that you speak.

Thirdly, if you want to honor God with your speech, *be wise with your words*. Be wise with your words. It's as simple as that. Be wise with your words. Wisdom really comes down to this. It's knowing *what* to say and what *not* to say. I think that's wisdom. Knowing what to say and what not to say.

For example, wisdom is knowing *what* to say and what *not* to say whenever my wife walks out of the bedroom wearing new clothes, and she says, "Hey, how do these pants make me look?"

But I think that's only half the battle with wisdom. Because wisdom is also knowing *when* to speak and when *not* to speak.

Here's where I think we're struggling. I think we're struggling with this as a country. Because I don't think we ever think about, "Should I say this, or should I not?" We just kind of think, "I'm going to say it! I'm going to say it loudly! I'm going to say it often." But I don't think that's God's best for us because it rages against all wisdom.

Proverbs 17:28 says this. **"Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues."** Man. In other words, if you want to be wise with your words, stop using your words so much. Stop using your words so much. Because here's a life cheat code that I've learned in ministry.

Whenever someone approaches a conversation with you, they're looking for one thing. They're looking to be *heard* and *understood*. They just want to be heard and understood, but here's the issue. Whenever I approach a conversation, I also want to be heard and understood. Whenever I'm talking with you, I want *you* to be slow to speak and quick to listen. You want *me* to be slow to speak and quick to listen.

You want me to listen and not speak. I want *you* to listen and not speak. See, whenever that happens, there's a conflict of interest here. We both want different things. I think this is what's happening right now in our country. None of us feel heard or understood, so we just start talking over one another.

Since we don't feel heard or understood, we have to talk louder and louder and louder because we just want to be heard. So we talk louder and louder until eventually it feels like everyone is screaming at each other because we so badly just want to be heard. In the middle of all this screaming and the chaos, church, do you know what stands out? Silence.

Somebody who's not going to up their tone. Somebody who's not going to speak loudly more often. Somebody who's going to sit back, and they're just going to listen. I think that'll stand out because the world is not acting that way. We *get* to act that way because we don't need be heard or understood by any of us.

We know we're already heard and understood by God. That frees us up to simply sit back and listen. I'm not saying we need to lose our voice as a church, but I am saying we don't need to focus on speaking more loudly; we need to focus on listening more intently, because the more we listen to others, the more they will feel loved.

Because there is so much pressure with our words, I think all of us want to say words that are important. We want to say a phrase that will last with someone for a lifetime. We want to do that, and it feels like there's a pressure with our words. But this week, I was thinking about the moments where I felt most loved in life. It wasn't moments when people were speaking *at* me. It's when they were willing to listen *to* me.

Because when you listen to someone, they will feel loved. My friend Scott on staff? He preached last week. He has a rule. Whenever he meets with someone, he tries to go by the 80/20 rule. He wants them to speak 80 percent of the time and himself to speak 20 percent of the time. Now here's what people think about Scott. They think he is wise.

They'll come up to me, and they'll be like, "Man, Scott is so smart." I'm like, "He's really not. He's a good guy. I enjoy Scott. I like Scott. He's not a genius, though." But what he has figured out is he has figured out Proverbs 17:28. Even a fool seems wise if they shut their mouth. If you're just willing to listen, people will think you're wise, and you'll be loved by them.

So what if we lived by that rule at Harris Creek? What if we lived by that 80/20 rule? Do we just ask questions and we listen? I think others would feel loved, and I think God would be honored. If you want to honor God with your words, be wise with your words. But Paul doesn't just say, "Hey, never, ever speak. Never ever open your mouth." He says when you open your mouth, you do have an opportunity. Here's what it is. When you speak, it should sound like this. He continues in verse 6. "**Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.**"

Fourthly, if you want to honor God with your words, *be gracious with your words*. I think this is what we're missing. I think we're just missing simple grace in our words, kindness in our words. Does anyone miss that? I think right now... In fact, I don't *think* this. I *know* this. We're living with some of the highest rates of anxiety and stress and depression in America's history. There's a *lot* that goes into that. There's a *lot* that goes into that.

But I think an *aspect* of that is our conversations. Because I think it's hard not to be stressed and angry and anxious whenever our conversations sound like this. "Man, can you believe what the Democrats did? Can you believe what the Republicans did? Can you believe what my boss did? Can you believe what *his* stance on masks are? Can you believe what *she* said? Can you believe this?"

That's what we sound like. It's hard not to be angry and frustrated when our conversations are always angry and frustrated. I mean, just take some time on social media. Every single one of us, if we just spend a few minutes on social media, it will raise your blood pressure. But here's what we *get* to do as Christians. We get to lower the temperature in the room.

We don't need to get riled up. We need to speak with grace and kindness and compassion. When we do that, what we're doing is, like what Paul says, we're just sprinkling some salt on the conversation. We're just making it taste better. Whenever people get to taste the language of the Lord, they will taste and see that he is good.

Salt isn't just used to make something taste better. Because back in the day pre-refrigerators, salt was used as a preservative. You'd put it on meat to keep it from going rotten. So what Paul is saying in this passage isn't that your conversation should just *taste* good. It's that whenever you speak with grace, you're speaking with a preservative. It's keeping you in conversation from going rotten.

Whenever you speak words *without* grace, your words are like rotten meat. They just stink. They just smell horrible. That's what Paul is saying. About a month ago, I had COVID. Thankfully, I recovered. I feel great now. One of the weird things about COVID, at least for me, is that I lost my sense of smell.

You never realize how many smells there are in this world until you can't smell anything. It's just a weird phenomenon. One day, I was walking down my driveway to our mailbox. At the end of our driveway, there's this hole in the ground. It's in between the road and our driveway. I don't really know what it is. It says *water meter* on it. I guess it measures water.

I have no idea what it does. All I know is that it smells horrible. It's like the whole sewage system of Woodway flows right by my house. So whenever I have to walk down to get our mail, I walk down our driveway and walk *all* the way around this water meter thing so I don't have to smell it. But the good thing was whenever I had COVID, I was like, "Man, I could stand on top of this thing and not smell it. It's amazing. Thank you, Jesus! I don't have to smell this garbage water meter."

I think that's where some of us have gotten with our words. We've lost the sense of our smell when it comes to our own words. You see, you don't know what your words smell like, but everyone else around you does. I hope this isn't unloving. I hope this isn't unkind, but I think some of you are treated like that water meter.

Whenever people see you, they take the long way around. They don't want to approach you. They don't want to sit in it because they know that your words are going to stink. They know that your words are always going to be filled with gossip. Your words are always going to be filled with negative self-talk. That your words are always going to be filled with complaining.

They don't want to be around that stench because your words just smell. But church, this should not be true of us. We should not be speaking smelly words, but we also shouldn't avoid those people. We shouldn't avoid them, but we also shouldn't fall into them. Because whenever we have a conversation that's starting to smell, what we *have* is an opportunity.

We have an opportunity to just sprinkle some salt on it. So whenever someone is talking to you and it's just filled with complaining, what you get to do is you get to sprinkle some words of hope on it. Whenever someone is gossiping with you, you just have the opportunity to sprinkle some compassion on the conversation.

Whenever there's a conversation that's just full of negativity, you get to sprinkle some hope on it. Whenever you do that, the conversation will taste better, and it'll emit an aroma that's pleasing to the Lord. It will draw others in because people are desperate for words of life and grace and kindness. When we speak that way, it's going to be a breath of fresh air to everyone around us. People are desperate for it. If you want to honor God with your words, be gracious with your words.

In summary today, the four things that we need to do if we want to honor God with our speech are this: *talk to God, talk about God, be wise with your words, and be gracious with your words.*

Now that sounds like a lot. "How am I going to do all of that this week? How am I going to learn to talk to God, talk about God, be wise with my words, and be gracious with my words? That's a lot, Nate. How am I going to get all that together this week?" Well, it is a lot, but I have good news because those *four* things are really just a result of *one* thing. It looks kind of like this.

There was a movie back in 1994 named *Nell*. The movie was called *Nell* and it was named Nell after this mom who raised her two daughters in the hills of Appalachian Mountains. She raised them in North Carolina, and they never interacted with anyone else. It was just her and her two daughters their whole lives.

When her daughters were babies, the mother had a debilitating stroke. She could no longer speak normally. Her words were slurred and confusing. It didn't sound like normal English. About 10 or 15 years later, this mom passed away. The town doctor finally came to go and mourn with these two daughters. Now they had never interacted with anyone else before.

So when the town doctor came to them, they started speaking to him, and he couldn't understand it. The words were slurred. They were confusing. It didn't sound like normal English. But what was weird was that these two could understand each other. You see, what happened was these two daughters spent all of their time with their mom. Every single day, they were with their mom.

They were in the presence of their mom. The only words that they ever learned were the words that she spoke because she was the only person who they spoke with. So when the outside world came and saw them, they didn't understand these words. They didn't understand this language because they didn't understand or know their mom.

Now isn't that a great picture of what we should look like as the church? We should be spending so much of our time in the presence of our Father that we just eventually begin to speak like him. We devote ourselves to soaking up his presence. Every single morning, we're in his presence. As we're driving to work, we're in his presence. As we're at work, at school, we're in his presence.

What I've learned is that when you've learned to spend time with him, you'll begin to speak like him. We'll start speaking words of grace and hope and life and peace and patience and joy and kindness and mercy and compassion. The rest of the world, as they're sitting over here in their bitterness and their anger and their frustration, they're going to hear our words, and they're going to be confused.

It'll sound like a different language, but our words won't be slurred. They won't be confusing. Our words will be clarifying. They'll be drawn into us, and they'll want to know how we learned to speak in such a way. I think that's the underlying theme of this whole series these last three weeks.

If we want to learn one thing, the one underlying theme is this: *you will speak like the people you hang out with*. You will speak like the people you spend the most amount of your time with. If you want to sound like God, you have to spend your time with God. Because I want to have an

accent with my speech, but I don't want to sound Minnesotan, and I don't want to sound Texan. I want to sound like a citizen of heaven. I want to have a godly accent.

In order to do that, I have to spend all of my time with him, because you will start speaking with the people who you spend the most amount of your time with. Some of you, you sound like CNN because you spend all your time with CNN. Some of you sound like Fox News because you spend all your time with Fox News.

Some of you sound like the world because you spend all your time with the world. I can't answer this for you, but all I know is that for me, I want to sound like Jesus. If I want to sound like Jesus, I have to spend time soaking in his presence. When we do, we'll begin to speak like him, too. When we do, we'll begin to speak like him too. When we do that, it will draw others in because the language of the Lord is better. It'll be a breath of fresh air to everyone around us. Let me pray that that would be so of us as a church, as Harris Creek.

God, thank you for your Word that speaks about our words. That we're not alone with our speech. We don't have to figure this out on our own, but you've given us instructions about how to honor you with the words that we say. Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit would be at work even now.

That you'd prompt us to devote ourselves to spending time in your presence this week because when we do, we'll begin to speak like you. We'll speak words of life and love and patience and joy and peace. God, we all see the need for that in this world. This world is broken. Our dialogue is hard to listen to sometimes, but may we, as a church, sound different.

May we speak the language of the Lord. Father, may that be a balm on this world as we speak words that honor you. So God right now, even now, would you uproot anything in our hearts that is not of you and plant things that are of you? God, we are here today because we want to honor you with what we say.

So God, may that be true of us as Harris Creek. God, we're just grateful that right now we get to worship you. We get to worship you because you've won the battle. We get to worship you because you're alive, you're with us, and you're for us. That changes everything about our lives. So Jesus, we love you, and it's in your powerful name that we pray, amen.