

Good evening, church. If you have your Bibles, turn to Psalm 19. In typical Chandler fashion, I'll get there eventually. I don't know what you were thinking on your way to church tonight, but every single one of us here tonight has the opportunity to go home and tell anyone we come in contact with this week, "God spoke to me." In a very real sense, that shouldn't be an unusual thing. How many of us would admit, if we were honest, it doesn't happen all that often? Maybe it is, but the reason is we're not paying attention.

With so many things going on around us, you all know the world in which we live. We're living in a 24-7, constantly connected, wired world, and it's ironic to me that we face the challenge of paying attention. What I want to do tonight as we begin is I want to teach you a new word. You see it up behind me. It's the word *semiotics*. It's a Jesus word. Jesus instructed us to learn semiotics. He actually gave us a direct order.

In Matthew 16, verse 2, Jesus said, **"When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning, 'It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times."** The Greek word for *signs* is *sēmeion*, from which we get the word *semiotics*, and Jesus directs us to learn how to read the signs, the handwriting on the wall.

Isn't it ironic that many of us have already ignored that today? When you were coming to church tonight, the majority of you passed numerous signs and billboards. Advertisers have spent tens of thousands of dollars to advertise their stuff, but how many of us would be hard-pressed to even mention one thing those billboards said, except maybe that one that said, "Stop," which some of you also ignored? Whether we know it or not, we all do semiotics.

We have a lot of people in our town who wait tables. Waiting tables is a semiotic system. Every interaction is an exchange of visual and verbal markers. What does a waiter do when he or she sees a crumpled napkin lying on the plate? It's easy. That's the universal sign for, "I'm done. You can take my plate." We have a lot of artists around here. Artists are simply people with high levels of semiotic awareness. We see what we choose to see, as artists have been telling us for centuries. Michelangelo is said to have remarked that he released David from the marble block he found him in.

Summer is winding down, and school is about to start. Many of you don't have kids, but for those who are parents, it almost started the first week of the summer. Kids would come up to their parents, and they

would complain and say...what? "I'm bored." No, you're not bored. You're semiotically challenged. There's stuff going on. You're just having a semiotic breakdown. You're not paying attention.

Before we as adults get all chronologically condescending, our reality is that most of us as disciples of Jesus are not in much of a state of semiotic awareness either. Sadly, the church is not very good at reading the signs. Francis Schaeffer used to say the church majors in being behind. That's not a compliment. By reading the signs of the times, we're talking about reading the signs of the Spirit's activity in the world.

Without doing our semiotic homework, Christians can only follow trends. You can't create them. Faith widens the imagination. Faith lengthens horizons. So why is it the body of Christ is not bursting with creativity? How many churches have we all been to in our lives that were really just bastions of boredom? It's in a state of semiotic breakdown. We're clueless as to what the Spirit is up to. We aren't paying attention.

Every year when I go to Israel, I make a point to go to this small Franciscan church that's on the Mount of Olives. It's known as Dominus Flevit Church, "the church of tears." If you're a Bible trivia buff, you know the shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35, which says...what? **"Jesus wept."** Dominus Flevit means "the cry of the Lord," and it commemorates a different occasion on which Jesus was moved to tears.

In Luke 19:41, it reads, **"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it..."** Why? "Because the days will come upon you when your enemies will dash you to the ground." Christians believe this was fulfilled in AD 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, but Dominus Flevit Church is believed to mark the spot where Jesus' mourning over Jerusalem occurred.

Look at the church. The current Dominus Flevit Church was commissioned by the Franciscans who still run the site. It was designed by an Italian architect. It was constructed in 1954, which, I might add, was a great year. Just saying. The church is in the shape of a teardrop to symbolize the Lord's tears, and the current church stands on the ruins of a seventh-century church. Some of the mosaics of that still remain.

You look out the western window of Dominus Flevit Church, and there's a beautiful view of the Temple Mount. During the construction of that modern church in 1954, an ancient Jewish tomb dating back to as early as the first century BC was found beneath. The tomb and several ossuaries, those bone boxes, can be seen by visitors today.

Notice the roof. On the four corners of the roof are those large jars, remembering on this mount Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they could not read the signs. That's why in Luke 19:44 Jesus said, **"...you**

did not know [recognize] the time of your visitation." When we look at the Bible as a whole, we find throughout Scripture God has always used sign language to communicate relationships.

Think about it. You have Noah and the rainbow. You have Abraham and circumcision. You have Moses and the Passover blood posts. You have Moses and the pillars of fire and cloud. You have Samson and his golden locks. You have the shepherds and mangers. You have Jesus on the cross. You even have Pilate's jesting billboard hung over the head of our Lord. It was a sign.

The same sign can mean different things to different people, because that sign that was hung... All these things mean different things. Think about the Passover. The Passover was freedom to the Israelites but death to the Egyptians. The sign that was held up over Jesus' head as he was on the cross was irony to Pilate. It was blasphemy to the Jewish religious leaders, but it was truth to all followers of Christ. Same sign, different meanings.

As a matter of fact, when Jesus turned water into wine or fed the 5,000 or raised Lazarus from the dead, he didn't think of what he was doing as a miracle. He thought of what he was doing as a sign. Folks, I want you to understand God is still signing us. God's finger is still writing. Today we're going to see how God has spoken through his creation and his Law. To use modern terminology, this means the psalm speaks of God's general revelation in nature and then God's special revelation in Scripture.

A professor friend of mine points to our need to move beyond a church-centric Christianity to a holistic, omnipresent theology of the signified reign of God. When you look at that word *signified*, it really is...what? "Sign-ified." A couple of weeks ago, Matt was talking about how Paul was talking to the Athenians in Acts 17, and he said, "God is not far from any of us." The good news tonight is he isn't. As we approach our text, I want us to do two things. I want us to look backward at history as we engage forward in our current day.

When you look at God's signs, you expand your imagination and lengthen your horizons, because when you think about it, look at the Scriptures. If God can speak through a burning bush, through plagues of locusts, through Balaam's ass, through Babylon, through blood on doorposts, through Peter, through Judas, through Pilate's jesting sign hung over the head of our Lord, through the cross itself, then that means God can and will speak today through art deco architecture, abstract expressionism, classic literature, contemporary literature, mass media, disease, Disney, hunger, Twitter, and everything else.

God meets us everywhere. There are all sorts of signs of transcendence. They're signals to us, the eminent transcendence. They are everywhere, but they're not being downloaded. What I want you to do tonight is I want you to tune in. I want you to find the channel and make the connection, because we're going to look at Psalm 19.

Psalms 19 may very well be the greatest song in the Psalter. It is one of the most magnificent poems in all of literature. It gives us some of God's sign language. We do not have any evidence that Jesus ever cited this psalm, but we do know the apostle Paul and the beloved disciple John used it to reference Jesus and his mission.

Many of you know I'm a relationship guy. I'll talk to anybody but a stop sign. Understand that this psalm is a relationship psalm. It is not a recipe. Yet there are rewards that are being promised. What it does is it gives us an early elaboration of the connection between voice and vision, which one well-known semiotician calls, and I really like this, *sound theology*.

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. 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. In them he has set a tent for the sun..."

Keep your Bibles open. We're going to walk through this, but notice. God's creation is a revelation of divine presence, the genius of Christian theology. It radically reconfigures the human conception of the sacred. Stay with me here. We know the world is not God and we don't worship the creation. At the same time, there is nothing that is without a witness to the divine. Everything that exists praises the Creator.

There is nothing that is inherently profane. It may be profaned by sin, but it is inherently an arena of divine activity and spiritual insight. David, the psalmist, begins by showing us how God is revealed in his creation. Guess what? Some people resist this, and it's nothing new. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome in the first century.

In Romans 1:20, he said, **"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."** Look at verse 1 of Psalm 19. **"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge."**

This time last week I was in Haiti. I was sweating with a bunch of 20-somethings. How about a Haiti shout-out? There you are. I see you. We were down there. We sweated copiously because there's no air-conditioning. There's electricity sometimes. So we were on the roof of this house we were getting ready for some missionaries coming in as we were leaving on Tuesday.

There were some nights that were just unbelievable. They were extremely dark. Why? There's no electricity. You don't have any ambient light like we have living in our cities. Those nights were so beautifully illumined by a host of stars. It just reminded me, knowing I was going to be talking about this text tonight... Beautiful, black, almost incandescent stars showing.

From the things that are seen every day, the psalmist is saying in these verses they lead us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestably evident and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens. You have the structure and beauty of them. You have the order and the influence of the heavenly bodies.

This instance of the divine power serves not only to show the folly of atheists, because they look up in heaven and they say there's no God... They see the effect, and they still say there is no cause. It also shows the folly of idolaters and the vanity of their imagination, who even though the heavens declare the glory of God, give that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, who Scripture describes as the Father of lights.

We have before us the constant and regular succession of day and night speaking to the glory of God, who first divided the light and the darkness and has from the beginning of time in Genesis 1 to this very hour preserved that established order without variation according to God's covenant with Noah. So we have the counterchanging of day and night in such an exact method.

It's a great instance of the power of God that calls us to observe what we see in the kingdom of nature is also in that of providence. He forms the light, creates the darkness, sets one over against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to you and to me, for he makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

In so doing, God is not only glorifying himself, but he is gratifying us by this constant revolution. Every day and every night speak of the goodness of God, and when they have finished their testimony, they leave it to the next day and the next night to stay the same. You look at verse 2. It says, "**Day to day pours out speech...**" David is using this metaphor claiming that creation, specifically the heavens, constantly attests to God's power and goodness.

Look at verses 4, 5, and 6, because he says, "**In [the heavens and the sky] 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. 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.**" To which all Texans in August say, "Amen." The light and the influence of the sun do, in a very special manner, declare the glory of God because all of the heavenly bodies...

That is the most conspicuous. It is also the most useful for those of us down here. Understand this. The sun is personified throughout this section, but it is not deified as in some Near Eastern religions. The context indicates the reference to the tent is probably an allusion to its absence from the nighttime sky. So it's not really improbable to surmise that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it, he took an occasion to declare the glory of God.

Beginning in verse 7, I have to admit I was in a little bit of a quandary. I was conflicted about how to present this next section of the psalm, because both sides of the coin are worthy of inspection. My initial thought was to give it as a question. If I were to offer this passage to you as a promissory passage, "What if you were offered the prospect of reviving your soul, being made wise, being restored to your right mind, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, and more?" if I threw it out there like that, you would probably look at me and say, "Come on, man. That's a colossal oversell." I might say that too.

I want you to look with me at the text and let God's Word speak for itself to us, because in verses 7 through 11 the Law... Again, we've been talking about nature. We're not talking about nature anymore. Nature is God's general revelation. This is God's special revelation through his Word. We find here God's special revelation reflects the character of the Author.

Different names are used for the Law. They are synonyms that point to the whole of God's special revelation to humanity. In verse 7, it says, "**The law of the LORD...**" That's the word *Torah*, the most general term for the Law. God's Word transforms the lives of those subject to that Word. I want you to see wisdom is not superior intellectual power.

I also have to admit that for a long time I didn't get this. You ought to know by now I'm not all that smart. I registered for 27 consecutive Augusts. Come on. If you have any sense at all, it shouldn't take that long, but you know how school goes. There's one grade and then the next grade is harder and then the next grade is harder. You keep going. They give you a piece of paper. You go somewhere, and they give you another piece of paper and all that kind of thing.

For many, many years I thought if you continued to accumulate knowledge and accumulate knowledge, then one day, wisdom... As Matt says, the only problem you have with that is the Bible, because I got to looking in the New Testament, and I thought Paul was messed up. I really did, because every time I find Paul using the words *wisdom* and *knowledge*, he said, "Wisdom and knowledge." I'm thinking, "Why isn't he saying, 'Knowledge and wisdom'? Because that's the way it works. Right?" Wrong.

It took me a long time to realize wisdom is not the accumulation of knowledge. Wisdom is the gift from God. James says, **"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God..."** It's a huge distinction. Wisdom is not superior intellectual power. God's Word instills reverence for him. So the psalmist is giving an account of these excellent properties and uses of the Word of God in six sentences, verses 7, 8, and 9. In each of them the name Jehovah is repeated, and it's not vain repetition, for the Law has its authority, and all of its excellence comes from the Lawmaker.

There are six titles given here of the Word of God to take in the whole of divine revelation, promises, precepts, and especially the gospel. He gives good properties of it. These kind of point to its divine original, which recommended to us, which praise it over all other laws whatsoever, so we have the effects of the Law in the minds of man. They show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it. How wonderful the effectiveness of divine grace is, going along with it and working by.

Look at the first one in verse 7, the first of six terms used for the Law of God. **"The law of the LORD is perfect..."** That means it is perfectly free from all corruption. It is perfectly filled with all good. It is perfectly fitted for the end for which it was designed, and it will make the follower of God perfect. You may have reacted a little bit there. "Come on. Perfect?"

We don't do that, do we? We always have a caveat for everything. Right? "Well, there's no way I can ever be perfect." You have a problem with the Bible, because the Bible says in Matthew 5:48, **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."** What is your definition of *perfect*? It has to do with being fully mature.

As a parent I can tell you when our kids were growing up, and I have one here who could tell you this, they would get in trouble... Not for ignorance. There was a lot of that, but they wouldn't get in trouble for ignorance. Ignorance is when you don't know any better. They would get in trouble for stupidity. That's when you know better and you don't do it.

One of the definitions of *perfect* there is talking about when any of us as adults, when we act on every single thing we know to act on. We don't do that very often, do we? That's what it's talking about. So it says, **"The law of the LORD is perfect..."** Nothing is to be added to it. Nothing is to be taken from it, but notice what it's used for. Its use is for reviving the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to bring us to God, to bring us to our duty. It shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God and the indispensable necessity of returning to him.

The second title in verse 7 is the testimony of the Lord, which witnesses for him to us. **"...the testimony of the LORD is sure..."** It is incontestably and enviably sure. What we may give credit to, what we may rely on,

what we may be confident in will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of divine truth. It is a sure direction in the way of duty. It's a sure foundation of living comforts and a sure foundation of lasting hopes.

It is of use to make us wise unto salvation. It'll give us an insight into the things divine and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple wise for their souls and for eternity. So those who are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly and willing to be taught, shall be made wise by the Word of God.

The third one in verse 8 says, "**...the precepts [statutes] of the LORD...**" Enacted by his authority and binding on all wherever they come. "**...the precepts of the LORD are right...**" They are exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man and the right counsels of God.

All of God's precepts concerning all things are right, just as they should be, and they will set us to rights if we receive them and submit to them. Because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The Law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy, and when it is written on our hearts, as the psalmist wrote about, it lays a foundation for everlasting joy, and it restores us to our right minds.

I want to stop for just a second. We're halfway through these six synonyms for the Word of God, the Law of God. I've always wanted to be in the top 10 in something, and I've lived long enough to get there, because if you're over 50 and at The Village, you're in the top 10, baby. Again, I don't want to be chronologically condescending, but I have 10, 20, or 30 years on some of you.

The reason this is so important to walk through these things tonight is so you might nail them down. You can do what you want. You can fight the Word of God. You can dash your life on the rocks of reality, but why would you want to do that? Nail these things down now. Don't be like my middle brother. He's really smart now. He has his own business and everything.

I think when he was young he was saving himself for later, because he wasn't all that smart. One day he learned the law of gravity. He was standing out in the backyard, he had a brick, he threw it up in the air, and he just stood there. Talk about stupid. We never had to send him to school to teach him the law of gravity after that day. That brick came down, man, bashed him in the head, the big dummy.

We laugh at that, but how many of us keep bucking the things of God and the directions of the Word of God. He has talked to us about the Law of God, the testimony, the precepts. Look at the next one, the latter part of verse 8. "**...the commandment of the LORD is pure...**" It is clear. It is without darkness. It is clean, without dross or defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy and is purifying to those who receive and

embrace it. This is the ordinary means the Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes. It brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery and directs us in the way of duty.

The fifth word is, "**...the fear of the LORD...**" True religion and godliness is prescribed in the Word, reigning in the heart, practiced in the life. "**...the fear of the LORD is clean...**" It's clean itself. It will make us clean, and it will cleanse our way. Here's the best part. It is enduring forever. As I said, man, we spent seven days in Haiti, and we sweated like dogs. It was hot. There was no relief. Some of you were supposed to be praying for us. Fail!

I told you specifically to pray for a breeze but not a hurricane. You didn't do jack with that breeze. We were sweating the whole time. We had two showers, or at least I did. I had two showers because the water wasn't working some of the time, and one night we had a group shower. Yeah, there was a thunderstorm, and we knew that was all we were going to get. So, man, we grabbed the soap and shampoo, and we got up on the roof. We were getting after it. That's all we had. It was crazy.

The last night we came back to Port-au-Prince, and we were going to stay in this guest house. That sucker had air conditioning, first air in a week. Man, it was wonderful. Just put that thing on, shut the door, and had a shower. Felt like a million dollars, laid down. The air conditioner is going. We could hear this hum outside because that was the generator. The power goes on and off down there, and so you have to have a generator.

As long as you heard that hum, you know that puppy was going. It was just great. I was laid all back in there like a big dog, asleep, cool as grits. I woke up sweating. I realized it was silent, because those generators don't run when they run out of diesel, and it had run out of diesel. So we woke up that last morning sweating again.

As I thought about this passage, the great thing is the fear of the Lord is clean, and it is enduring forever. It isn't going to run out of diesel. It is of perpetual obligation and can never be repealed. The ceremonial law that was present in David's day has long since gone away, but the Law concerning the fear of God is forever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

Notice the last synonym for the Law of God, the rules or judgments of the Lord, all of his precepts, framed in infinite wisdom, "**...the rules of the LORD are true...**" They are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths. They are righteous, and they are so altogether. There is no unrighteousness in any of them because they are all of a piece.

Then in verse 10 you see how greatly he prized the commandments of God. Very quickly, he says they are more desired than gold, even fine gold. Gold is earthly. It matters a little bit down here, but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body and the concerns of time, but grace is for the soul and the concerns of eternity. It says here the Word of God received by faith is sweet to the soul. It is sweeter than honey (verse 10) and drippings of the honeycomb.

In verse 11, you notice what use he made of the precepts of God's Word. He says, "**...by them is your servant warned...**" It's interesting that you see what advantage David is promising himself by his obedience to God's precepts. He says, "**...in keeping them there is great reward.**" Those who are paying attention are unspeakable gainers. There is reward, not only *after* keeping the commandments, but *in* keeping God's commandments. There is a present great reward of obedience.

Then in verses 12 and 13, David makes a penitent reflection on his own heart. The psalmist knows something you and I know. We sin, both consciously and unconsciously, in ignorance of what God requires, and David is praying against both faults. Do you see what's going on here? From the corrective of the divine Law, he calls his sins his errors. If God's commandments are true and righteous, then every transgression of the commandment is an error, grounded upon a mistake. Every wicked practice arises from some corrupt principle. It is a deviation from the rule we're to work by, by the way we're to walk.

We find here from the extent and from the strictness and from the spiritual nature of the divine Law, he learns his sins are so many he can't calculate the number of them. His sin is so exceedingly sinful he cannot understand the heinousness and the malignity of it. We are all guilty of many sins, which through our carelessness or partiality to ourselves we're not even aware of.

Again, I thought about that night we had that shower in that storm. Man, we were nasty. We had been living in dirt and smog and sweat just all the time for a couple of... I mean that rain was coming down. I got to thinking about this and thought, "How stupid would it have been of me to just say to myself, 'Self, I'm just going to wash the left side'?" Why would you do that? It doesn't make any sense, does it?

Think about when we confess our sins to God. Usually, we skim the surface, don't we? We hit the little things, or the little things in our eyes. There are no little things in God's eyes. We don't go deeper. Many of us have been guilty of things we've forgotten, and when we attempt to be particular, when we attempt to be specific, when we attempt to be so thorough in the confession of sin, we really have to honestly conclude, "Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."

In many things we all offend, but who can tell how often they offend? We have reason to celebrate and to rejoice because the Father's goodness is we're under grace. We're not under the Law. Otherwise, we'd be

undone, but I want you to see what David is praying against. David is praying against sin. All of the discoveries made by the Law should drive us to the grace of God as David does here.

He's moving from mercy to pardon, finding himself unable to specify all of the particulars of his transgressions. Notice what he does. He cries out to the Lord, "**Declare me innocent from hidden faults.**" They're not hidden from God, because none are, but such as were hidden from his own observation of himself.

The best of us have reason to suspect ourselves guilty of many hidden faults, and even secret faults, hidden sins, are defiling. They leave us unfit for communion with God, but when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them. First John 1:9 says, "**If we confess...**" If we agree with God as to the seriousness of our sin, then, "**...he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"

Having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be repented. He wants them prevented. All who truly repent of their sin and have been pardoned are very attentive not to relapse into sin again or to return to that folly. Notice what David does. If you have your Bibles open, I want you to underline *presumptuous sins*, because I want to talk about that for just a second.

We ought to pray that we would be kept from sins but particularly, especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God and wound conscience. They wither our peace. They shock our hopes. The latter part of verse 13 says, "**...let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.**" Friends, that only comes by God's grace.

Think about presumptuous sins. What are those? They are heinous. They are dangerous. Those who sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their conscience either in contempt of or defiance of the Law and its sanctions... Folks, this is high-handed sin. It is the outworking of arrogance. It's a great transgression.

Every one of us ought to be afraid of sinning presumptuously, though through the grace of God maybe we've been kept from them. None of us are to be high-handed or high-minded but fear the Lord. So being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God whether we are pushing forward toward a presumptuous sin to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation or by his grace giving us victory over it.

Finally, in verse 14, David humbly begs the divine acceptance of his pious thoughts and affections. I want you to pay attention here, because I use that word *pious* on purpose. I'm kind of distressed about that word.

I'm a word guy, and I don't know where it was along the way that word got hijacked. You know how we use *pious*.

When we refer to somebody as pious, it's not a compliment, is it? "Oh, he's so pious!" I don't know where the word got hijacked because it's a good word. You go back to the sixteenth century, and there were those in Germany who followed Christ so closely that people called them, they were referred to, they gave them the tag "the Pietists."

It was a positive designation. These people were so in love with God. They followed so hard after God. Their lives showed such an eternal difference on this side of eternity that they got a name for it. Somewhere along the line we've lost it. I want to reclaim it. David is giving us his pious attention and affections to God.

This is an example of David's self-talk. Many of you remember Dr. Paul David Tripp. He has spoken in our church several times. He's that guy who's really good and has a mustache about as big as that screen. Do you know him? He talks a lot, reminding us to monitor our self-talk. We need to monitor that ongoing inner conversation that's constantly looping between our ears.

What we find in this last verse of our text is we get to listen in on David's self-talk. Look at what he says. **"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."** Don't miss the connection between this and what goes before. He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then he begs that God would accept his service. If we favor our sins, we can't expect God to favor us or our service.

What his services were... The words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart were his pious, holy affections offered up to God. The truly pious meditations of his heart coming from us should not be smothered. They should not be suppressed, because they are for God's glory, and they are for the edification and for the building up of others. The words of our mouths in prayer and praise should not be formal but ought to be arising from the meditations of our hearts.

Do you know what one of my favorite things in life is? I love to hear a new Christ-follower pray. Do you know why? They haven't learned "Christianese" yet. They're just talking to God. They don't know jack about "Lead, guide, and direct. Lord, bless the gift and the giver." They don't know anything about all that. They're just talking to God. It's a reminder for us. It's a lesson that the words of our mouths in prayer and praise should not be formal, but they ought to be arising from the meditation of the heart.

Look at what David's desire was concerning his service, that it might be acceptable with God. After all, if it's not acceptable with God, then what value is it? He had great encouragement to hope for this. Why? Because God was his strength. God was his Rock. God was his Redeemer. I've been to Israel a number of times.

I sometimes think strange things, and one of the things that came to my mind last night as I was thinking about this passage was do you reckon David had any idea how many rocks he'd seen in his life? There's no way. There are rocks everywhere in Israel. We know rocks and David... There were a lot of important instances in his life dealing with rocks.

We know if you go down by the Dead Sea there's a place called Ein Gedi. That's where David was hiding out in a cave from Absalom, his son, when he was trying to kill him. We know there's another instance with Saul earlier on in his life when he went in and he cut the hem of Saul's robe in a cave when he was relieving himself and all of that. We won't go there. He describes God as his Rock. The Rock of his salvation and strength.

It's a reminder to you and to me. Do we connect the little and the large things in our lives to our relationship with God? Again, you look at Jesus as the example. Jesus expressed an earthy, semiotic ministry and theology by materializing his message. He used all kind of different media. He used images. He used stories. He used actions. We know he stilled storms. He healed limbs. He used objects like spit, fig trees, bursting baskets. He was a master semiotician.

You could even say Jesus' ministry was more a semiotic ministry than a preaching, teaching, and healing ministry. Instead of taking stands, Jesus took hikes during which he performed signs, like the coin with Caesar's image stamped on it. He overturned the moneychangers' tables in the temple, the water into wine at the small town of Cana in Galilee. Do you remember that? That was Jesus' first sign. It's in John, chapter 2. It's interesting that Jesus interceded in that wedding at Cana, not to sober up the party but to make it more festive. He added 600 to 900 gallons of vintage wine. Party!

Then you look at his public entry into Jerusalem. He didn't come in on a dressed-up horse like you would expect of a king. He came riding in on a donkey. Seriously? The ultimate sign of the revealed Jesus as the life-giving sign was his raising of Lazarus. Friends, all of this is to say Christian semiotics enters into the connection between signs and people and God.

To put it another way, Christian semiotics is attention that leads to intention, attention that leads to transformation and remembrance. Attention that leads to remembrance is called...what? A sacrament. The most sacred things are sacraments. Sacraments are celebrations of our attentiveness and sign-

reading. The more attentive you are, the more you're going to recover and discover. The more attentive you are, the more you see Christ in every person and you see the sacramental nature of all of life.

That's why the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, and he said, "When you prepare yourself to come to the Table, you need to examine your own heart." We'd rather examine somebody else's heart, but that's not what he says. This is not the time to examine somebody else's life or heart or motivations. I would ask you tonight as we close to just take a moment for a true pious reflection. Don't skim over it. Don't smother this opportunity to just stop the self-talk and let God speak into your heart and your life, past and future.

Maybe you're here tonight and you've never considered the claims of Christ and you hear God speaking to your heart tonight. You aren't here by accident. You need to pay attention. As a matter of fact, "Pay attention," may very well have been Jesus' signature phrase. Some of us grew up on the King James Version. He used to say at the beginning of a passage, "Verily, verily." In the newer translations, he says, "I tell you the truth." He's saying, "Pay attention." That's what he's saying to us tonight.

Pay attention. What is God saying to you? Faith is the gift of reading the signs of the presence of God, but the point of reading signs is not the signs themselves but the Signifier, Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate Sign, the ultimate *sēmeion*. Singular. That's why we always point to him. Maybe in a moment you'd like to talk with someone maybe to pray that God would give you a heart transplant today.

For the majority of us as Christ-followers, the question becomes: Are we coasting? Are we skimming? Or are we pressing into God daily, acknowledging life is more than we can handle? Are you still wearing the mask? "I can handle this. I got this." You don't have jack. Life is more than any of us can handle. We can take the mask off and stop pretending we can and throw ourselves on the grace of God.

Have you gotten off that hamster wheel of performance, forsaking the rat race as being your primary identity? Don't live your life pursuing the empty promises of achievement over against a life of fulfillment through faithfulness to the Word and the will of God. How many signs have you been missing? Are you paying attention to God's handwriting on the wall?

As we come to the Table tonight, you don't have to be a member of The Village Church to celebrate Communion, but we do ask you be a Christ-follower. We take these simple elements, and we remember the body and the blood of Christ, shed to pay the price for our sin.

Father, we thank you tonight for the power of your Word. We thank you for the reminders as in your Word you just turn the diamond to see so many different facets of your Law, your commandments, your

precepts, your testimony, your fear, your rules. Father, I pray that we would take your Word to heart. I pray that we would hide it in our hearts, as the psalmist said in another place, that we might not sin against you.

We pray as we come to the Table tonight that we would have the grace and the guts to examine our own hearts. We pray that you would do a work in us right now that we were not even expecting. Father, we pray that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts would be acceptable in your sight, oh Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer, in whose name we pray, amen.

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