

Speak, O Lord

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Well, we are in the Psalms for the summer, and we've made our way to Psalm chapter 12, and so if you would, please take your Bibles, open them up to Psalm chapter 12. If you don't have your own copy of God's Word, that's okay. We have those available for you in the seat back in front of you, but please do take a copy of the Bible and open it up to Psalm chapter 12, and when you've found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Psalm chapter 12, to the choir master, according to the Shemineth, a Psalm of David. Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone, for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor. With flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, those who say, with our tongue we will prevail, and our lips are with us. Who is master over us? Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord. I will place him in the safety for which he longs. The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. You, O Lord, will keep them. You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man. Lord, again, we pray once more, would you teach us according to your Word, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

[2 : 0 1] We sang a new song this morning. I wonder if you, most of you didn't know that one, I'm assuming. It's called Reformation Song in the first line there. Actually, the whole song works through the five solos of the Reformation. In Christ alone, through faith alone, by grace alone, according to the scriptures alone, to the glory of God alone. We'll sing it again next week, and we're gonna learn that song together.

But the first line there, your word alone is solid ground, the mighty rock on which we build. In every line the truth is found, and on every page with glory filled. I love that.

Well, we ended last week with Psalm chapter 11 with a definition of the holiness of God from Richard Lentz. I think it's fitting for us to begin there this week again as we look to Psalm chapter 12.

Richard Lentz, he says that the holiness of God refers to the absolute moral purity of God and the absolute moral distance between God and his human creatures. In other words, what that definition says is that God is completely, totally, absolutely, beautifully pure, and we are not.

He is not like us. In a thousand ways, he is not like us. Every thought of his mind is eternally, completely, infinitely pure. Every intention of his heart is totally pure. Every action of God is totally pure. Every word of God is totally pure. And David is looking around him, and he says, nobody here looks like that. So he calls out to God in verse 1, and he says, save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone. The faithful have vanished from among the children of men. David is struggling with the fact that although we are made in the image of God, we're made to reflect the glory of God, the people of his generation don't really look much like God at all. God is holy, and we are not.

[4 : 1 8] This is what we call a psalm of lament. We know that word, a psalm of lament. And I'm always amazed as I read through the psalms how consistently and constantly relevant they are to our time and to our context. Because you know what? As I talk to you, as I hear you pray, as I hear you lament, I hear you say some similar things to what David is saying here in Psalm chapter 12. You look out at the godlessness in our country, and the godlessness in our culture, and the godlessness in our world, and I hear you say things like, save, O Lord, the godly one is gone. The faithful have vanished.

Where are the faithful in our generation? There was and there is a great distance between the holiness of God and his creatures in David's time and in David's day, and there was and there is a

great distance between the holiness of God and his creatures in our day. And the focus here in Psalm chapter 12, maybe you noticed it, maybe you picked up on the theme as we sang these songs this morning, is on the difference between God and man specifically in the area of speech. It's how we talk and what that reveals about us. But what David shows us here in Psalm chapter 12 is that this great difference between God and man and that makes our current situation seem so hopeless is actually the only source of hope.

Listen to this. Our problem is that we are not like God, but our only hope is that God is not like us. And say that again, make sure we got it, okay? Our problem, the hopeless situation in our culture, in David's culture, is that we are not like God, and we see that clearly in the way that we speak. But our only hope and our only confidence is that God is not like us. And guess what? We see that in the way he speaks. So first, let's look here and consider the words of man. We're going to consider the words of man, and then we'll consider the words of God. We're going to see the great gulf and distance between the two.

First, let's consider the words of man. Look there again, starting in verse 1. David is looking out at the wickedness around him, and it's an apparently, it's a hopeless situation, and he cries out, save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone. The faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Now, why does he say that? What drives him to cry out to the Lord in desperation there in verse 1? It is because of the way that wicked men speak. And particularly, he's grieved about the way that wicked men speak in two specific ways here. He says, wicked men speak lies on one hand, and wicked men boast on the other. Look there to verse 2. He says, wicked men speak lies. They lie. [7 : 30] Everyone utters lies to his neighbor. With flattering lips and a double heart, they speak. And David is painting with a pretty broad brush here. This is wide sweeping language. No one is godly. No one is faithful. Everyone utters lies. They all speak with a double heart, he says. They say one thing to your face, and in their hearts they mean something else. They all speak with flattering lips, he says. You know, you can also translate that flattering lips as slippery, smooth. You can't take what they say at face value.

There's always something more. It's kind of, there's something hidden. They can't be trusted. He says, everyone lies to his neighbor. And that would be one thing if he was talking about the other nations.

Right? The Gentiles who don't know the Lord. The Gentiles who don't have the law of God. The Gentiles who aren't familiar with the ways of the Lord, who serve pagan gods. But he's not talking about them.

He's talking about Israel. Israel was meant to be the godly ones. They're meant to be the faithful among the children of man. God's people are meant to be distinct. They're meant to be people of the truth.

But he looks out and he says, they're just like everybody else. Where is the godly one? You've all heard the story of the boy who cried wolf, right? Everybody knows that story. You grew up hearing that story. A little boy is told to watch the sheep. And he's told to call out if he sees the wolf coming. And so that way the townspeople, if they hear him crying wolf, they'll come and they'll help him get rid of the wolf. Well, the day comes. The day gets long. The boy gets tired. He gets bored. So what does he do? He cries wolf. He decides to stir up a little bit of excitement. And the townspeople come running to help. But when they get there, they see that there is no wolf. So the boy gets a good laugh. The townspeople go back to their home. So he does it again the next day. And again the next day.

[9 : 44] And again the next day. And each time the townspeople come running. And each time there is no wolf. But then the day comes where the boy is out watching the sheep. And guess what he sees? He sees a wolf.

And this time he calls out for the townspeople to come help just like they did before. This time he's actually telling the truth. There is actually a wolf. But because he lied and he lied and he lied and he lied and he lied. Guess what happened? Nobody believed him. And nobody came to help. The moral of the story is if you are a liar, eventually no one will believe you even when you're telling the truth.

And there's a lesson there for Christians as well. Because as God's people we're meant to be people of the truth. Amen? And we're called to love our neighbors. Right? That's the summary of the law is love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength.

And the second is like it. What is it? Love your neighbor as yourself. And the number one way that we love our neighbor is by speaking the truth to them. The number one way you can love your neighbor is by sharing with them the truth of the gospel. Now Christians have big claims to make, don't we?

And we have big truths to share. We believe and we express to our neighbors that we believe God is real, that God created the world, that all of us have sinned against God, that God sent his own son to live and to die and to rise to save us from our sin, that sinners are made right with a holy God by faith and repentance.

[11 : 34] And we're called to take that message and to share it with our neighbors. But why in the world would they believe us about that if the rest of the time we talk we can't be trusted?

Christians of all people ought to be people of the truth. People who love the truth. People who speak the truth. People who share the truth all of the time. David looks out at his generation and he says, that's not happening. Everyone lies. Not only this, he says, everyone boasts with their words. Verse 4, he says, they say with our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are with us. Who is master over us? In other words, they think that because they're skilled with their tongue, because they're skilled with their deceptive words, that they can do whatever it is they want to do. That they can use their words to accomplish all their evil purposes.

And again, apparently, yet again, their evil purposes here are to take advantage of the poor and the needy. This is a constant theme throughout the Psalms. And so David calls out to the Lord to act. Verse 3, he says, cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that makes great boasts. He calls upon the Lord to do something. To stop these wicked men from speaking lies and from speaking these boastful words. He says, cut off their tongues. Cut off their lips. That's serious, isn't it?

And you may hear this and you may wonder, well, what's the big deal? Is it that big of a deal? I mean, people say things that they don't mean all the time, right? People boast all the time out of all the sinful things that David could have looked out and complained about that's going on here in his day and in his time. We got people killing each other out there. We got people bowing down and worshiping false gods out there. We got people worshiping idols out there. Why is he so hung up and bothered about the way people talk? Is it really that big of a deal? Well, the fact is, the Bible makes a big deal out of the way we talk. And the dangers of lying and boasting, as well as on the positive side, the blessings of speaking in ways that honor the Lord and reflect the character of God. The truth is that our tongues are powerful either for good or for bad.

[14 : 28] Well, listen to what James says in James chapter 3. He says, Does that sound serious to you?

He says, Every kind of beast and bird and reptile and sea creature can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. So he says, My brothers, these things ought not be so. Instead, we're called, in Ephesians 4, Paul says, To let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion that it may give grace to those who hear.

Do you hear the difference here? This world of difference that can come from the same instrument, the same member of your body, it can come a world of righteousness and good and building up and uplifting and constructing, or it can come a world of fire set on fire by hell to tear down and to destroy.

And ultimately, we're told we ought to pay close attention to the way that we speak, because Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 12, We will all give an account for every careless word that we speak.

[16 : 11] Now, there's a sobering thought. Every word? Listen to this from Matthew 12. You don't have to turn there. Just listen to this. Jesus says, The tree is known by its fruit.

He says to the Pharisees, You brood of vipers! How can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

The good person, out of his good treasure, brings forth good, and the evil person, out of his evil treasure, brings forth evil. Now, I tell you, on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every careless word that they speak.

For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Now, how can this be? It's because our words are never just words, but our words reveal what's going on in our

heart.

Our words are the outward explanation, the outward demonstration, the outward manifestation of whatever it is that's happening in our heart.

[17:17] And so the internal, invisible sins of greed, and of selfishness, and maliciousness, they make their way out into the open through lying words.

Double-hearted words. Flattering words. And in the same way, the internal, invisible sins of pride in our heart, it bursts forth out of our heart into prideful actions or boastful words.

Our words reveal our heart. This is true for us, and that's the problem. We praise God that it's also ultimately true of the Lord.

God's words reveal God's heart. And here, in point number two, the second half of the psalm, David shifts his attention now to God's words.

Again, our problem seen in our words is that we are not like God, but our only hope seen in God's words is that God is not like us.

[18:23] So second, we see God's words. Look there to verse 5 with me. Here in verse 5, God speaks. And as God speaks, we see God's heart.

Verse 5, he says, Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord. I will place him in the safety for which he longs.

The Lord speaks. And he makes this promise. This is an overflow of the Lord's heart, of compassion and care for the poor and the needy. He sees the poor.

He sees their oppression. He hears their groaning. And so he promises, I will arise, and I will place him in the safety for which he longs.

This is a promise. But here's my problem. Now, every politician I have ever heard has made promises that sound exactly like this.

[19:24] Am I wrong? You take out the specifics. This is the template for every campaign speech I have ever heard. And I promise you, as we get closer to November, you will take this framework, and you copy and paste Democrat, Republic.

It doesn't matter. Every politician says these words. I see the issues you're dealing with. I hear your complaints. I will arise. I will deal with it.

Vote for me. We'll take care of it, right? And doesn't that sound familiar? I know I'm young, but I've been around long enough to have stopped believing most of these promises a long time ago.

So, what makes God's words different? When God says, I hear your problem, I see the issue, I will arise, I will take care of it.

What is it that makes his words trustworthy when our words are not? Why can we trust him? I'll tell you why.

[20:28] It's because God's words are true, and God's words are effective. And here's where we see the contrast. Do you see it? Men, when they speak, David says, men's words, they lie, but he says, God's words are true.

God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind. This is Numbers 23. God's words are true, and wicked men boast.

They think that through their words, they can accomplish all their purposes, but guess what? God's words actually are effective. God's words actually accomplish all of God's perfect will.

God's words are true. God's words are effective. Therefore, God's words can be trusted. David says in verse 6, God's words are true.

God's words are pure. Like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. I don't know much about silver refining on the ground, what in the world that is, but what I understand of it is you heat the silver up, you get it real hot, hot enough that it melts, and then it turns into a liquid, and once it's in a liquid form, all of those impurities that are in the silver, they rise up to the top.

[21:53] You scrape it away, so that what's remaining there is more pure than what it started as. David says this is as if God's word has been purified seven times.

That doesn't mean not eight, not nine, not ten, as if it could be more pure than it is, but seven, we know that's that number of perfection, that number of completion. In other words, David is saying that God's word, unlike my word, unlike your word, unlike every word of man, God's word is totally, completely, 100% trustworthy and pure 100% of the time.

Not only this, we've got to expand a little bit outside of this psalm to see it, but I want to show it to you. God's words are effective. Where man boasts with our tongues, we can accomplish all our

plans.

God's words actually accomplish all that he intends. The words of God don't just express what he wants to do. The words of God do what he wants to do.

They are effective in accomplishing his purposes. They do what he wants. Listen to this. Listen to this from Isaiah 55. In fact, if you turn there, if you're able to, I want you to see it.

[23 : 14] This is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. And we preached through this maybe a year ago. I love this chapter.

Isaiah 55. Listen to this invitation from the Lord. He says, Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Now why? Why should we think that God would show mercy to sinners like us? We're invited to come to him. Why? Verse 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. In other words, we can have confidence that the Lord will receive us with mercy, because he's not like us.

[24 : 23] How is he not like us? Verse 10. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, and giving seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

God's word is effective. Accomplishes all of God's purposes. David knows this.

He believes this. He calls this to mind, so that when God says, I will arise and care for the poor, and I will rescue them from their oppression, David looks out and he says, you've said it, and so I believe it.

And actually, because you've said it, although I don't quite see it yet, although it looks like the godly have vanished from this generation, I believe that it is as good as done, because you've said it.

[25 : 37] You, O Lord, will keep them, he says in verse 7. You hear the change in confidence? You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side, the wicked prowls, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.

My hope is that you have spoken, and because your word is true and effective, I believe and I trust you will do what you've promised. And so our hope, church, our confidence, as we look out among the generation where we've been placed, as we listen to the lies in our culture, as we walk in and wonder where has the godly gone, our hope is that God is not like us.

God's word accomplishes God's purposes. Think about it with me for a moment. How was it that God created all things? He didn't take materials like we do to make anything.

He didn't gather up some of this, some of that, and put it together and make the world. What did he do? He sent forth his word.

He spoke, let there be light, and there was light. His words accomplished his purpose. He said, let there be animals and birds and flowers and creeping things, and there was.

[27 : 06] He sent forth his word. His words accomplished his purpose. How was it that God accomplished his plan of redemption, church? John chapter 1 tells us he sent forth his word.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him.

We're talking about a person now. And without him was not anything made that was made. Who is this person? Who is this word through whom all things were made? Verse 14 says, This eternal, divine, life-giving word through whom all things were made became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory. Glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. How did God accomplish his plan of salvation? He sent the living word of God, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, into the world to perfectly accomplish God's will.

And how was it that God saved you, Christian? How was it that you came to faith in Christ? There's only one way. Faith comes through hearing.

[28 : 27] And hearing through the what? Through the word of Christ. At some point in your life, at some point in your story, God sent forth his word with power to convict you of your sin and to turn you in faith to your Savior, to convince you that Christ has lived and has died and has risen in your

place.

You are a Christian because God sent forth his word to you in power to save. And so, how is it that we think God will still save sinners?

God will still build his church. God will still work in our church and in our lives and in this community today.

It is only by his word. As we send it out, I remind you of our mission and our vision as a church. Our mission at Sea Wee Bay Baptist Church is to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 47] Why? Because it's that word, it's that message of hope and life and salvation in Christ where God's glory is seen most clearly. and so we want to make a really big deal out of that message.

How do we plan to do it? Three ways. Enjoy God, equip the saints, evangelize the lost. Enjoy God. How do we do that? We're doing that right now.

Are you having fun? We enjoy God as we gather together and we sing the word of God, we pray the word of God, we read the word of God, we fellowship around the word of God, we preach the word of God, we receive the word of God and then we leave this place to share the word of God.

We equip the saints. How in the world do you equip the saints for the work of ministry? You give them the word. The word builds the church. And we evangelize the lost.

That's our primary ministry towards the non-believers in our community is to evangelize the lost. How in the world do we do that? We give them the word. Share the gospel with the lost and we trust and we pray that the word will do the work of ministry and the word will accomplish all that God has planned for it.

[31 : 10] Amen? You all know that I love the stories of the Protestant Reformation. I'm going to close here with a story. We began our service singing this Reformation song.

We're going to end with a story from the Reformation. At the very heart of the Reformation was a shift in attention away from what man had to say about God and his world and back to what God had to say in his word.

Martin Luther and his contemporaries they began to realize by the grace of God that what they had been taught what they were hearing by the Catholic Church about salvation and about our access to God was a lie.

So these men they began to read and began to write they began to read and to write some more they began to write and to read some more and the Protestant Reformation was not won by the strength of the sword it was won by the strength of the word and for the first time in years lay people had access to the word of God in their own language in ways that they could read and understand they were hearing the word of God and the result was explosive.

You may associate the Reformation primarily with names like Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and they're primary actors there but I want to give you one more name that played a vital role Johannes Gutenberg in the wise providence of God just as these men were in the process of recovering gospel doctrine and producing piles and piles and piles of books explaining God's word and exposing lies Gutenberg invented the printing press and Gutenberg's printing press made it so that these precious biblical truths and these words of truth could be distributed to the masses in ways that were unimaginable before and so now for the first time we have piles of commentaries on God's word explanations of biblical texts and so

[33 : 29] Luther as he reflected later on how in the world the reformation happened I love this quote he said while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf the word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever afflicted such losses upon it I did nothing the word did everything church we live in a time and in an age and in a culture where wickedness is common place where lies saturate the culture if we want to see the lies of the world around us exposed and the truth prevail I give you the same application from David's day to Jesus' day to Luther's day to ours give yourself to the word of God read it devour it meditate on it memorize it sing it preach it proclaim it share it love it and trust that through it God will accomplish all his purposes let's pray

Lord we praise you that you are not like us your word can be trusted your word is true and your word accomplishes all the purposes for which you send it and so I pray in confidence trusting Lord that as your word was just preached God you will accomplish all that you intended to do in us and

