

Date: July 23-24, 2022

Title: *Clarity Everyday*

Scripture: Psalm 19:1-7

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Good morning, Orchard Hill. It is great to be here. You know, I often say that when I start, that is not a throwaway line. That is something that I really feel deeply, that it is great to be with you here in Wexford, the Chapel, Strip District, Butler, and Southpointe, and Online.

And I just want to take a moment and recognize the great two weeks that have happened here at the Wexford campus with KidsFest. KidsFest has been such an important part of the DNA of Orchard Hill for most of its church life, and this year has been great after 2020, not having KidsFest due to COVID and then 2021 with social distancing measures. It's been great to see KidsFest return to what it has been and even greater in some ways.

Great high school leaders and great volunteers. Thank you. So many of you volunteered. Great Middle School Serve participation. And here's something else that's cool. You often think about KidsFest in terms of what it is like here at our Wexford campus, which is three weeks, 500 plus kids a week, 1500 kids over the summer, all the leaders, and all of those great things.

But this last weekend, we also had KidsFest in Butler. I think they had almost 50 kids in Butler this last week for a single day and they're working toward expanding. Really cool. You heard earlier about KidsFest in Haiti, campers for campers and so every year we help facilitate KidsFest in Haiti at a church that we helped plant there. And so that's an awesome thing.

And then here's something else you may not know, and that is there are some ripples of KidsFest that you may not see or know. I know there are some here in the area where people have been here and maybe helped it in some other places. But Brandon Rickard, who used to serve as our Pastor of Student Ministries here, I knew Brandon from the church I used to pastor. That's where he attended. And then I brought him here to help with our student ministry. So, he was here for five years with KidsFest. Jack Hickey grew up here doing KidsFest and then went with Brandon to the church that he's at now, which is the church I used to pastor.

And I was texting with Brandon the other day, and they're doing something. They don't call it KidsFest. But they're reaching hundreds of kids in Adrian, Michigan, doing KidsFest, basically. And it's just kind of cool to see that what they learned here

and did here, now they're using to reach families in a whole other place. And so, the ripples of what happens here every summer continue just to be used to help point people to Jesus Christ. And it's cool to be able to be a part of it.

On a personal note, I continue to recover and if all continues to go well, I'm hopeful that in about two weeks I should be able to walk without crutches. And so, I'm still in recovery. Thank you for your continued prayers and support during this time.

Let's pray together, Father, thank you for the chance to gather here today. And God, I pray that you would speak to each of us wherever we're coming from, whatever we've been walking through. God, I pray that my words would reflect your word in content, tone, and emphasis. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

This spring, my wife and I went to Chicago to visit our oldest son and our daughter-in-law who live in the city of Chicago. And when you go to a city, especially a city like Chicago, where my son lives, he lives down in the heart of the city. So, when you're there, you don't really drive your car. You park and you walk. You take public transportation more than you drive. And when you're used to driving, if you live in the suburbs or more rurally, you drive quickly from place to place and you don't notice things maybe as clearly as you do when you walk over and over.

When we were there and walking in different places, I saw a sign in a window, and then I saw the same sign in another window and in another window. Maybe you've seen this or maybe you haven't, but the sign said this, "In this house, we believe that black lives matter, that love is love, that women's rights are human rights, that no human is illegal, that science is real and kindness is everything."

Now, that sign clearly expresses in our day and age, a series of views. We could take the time to pick it apart and talk about it. And my point isn't as much the particular statements in the sign as it is this. And that is, I think there's been a change in our world, in our culture, over the last few years.

And here's what I mean. It used to be that the predominant way people saw things like this is, listen, you live your life the way you want to live your life. I'll live my life the way I want to live my life. Don't tell me how to live, and I won't tell you how to live. And what's happened over the last couple of years is now there's a way of thinking that says, I have a way that is right and I want you to adopt it. And if you don't adopt it, you're going to be canceled or thought of as less.

And so, a sign like this says, if you don't believe all that Black Lives Matter encompasses or that science is real or love is love, whatever all of those statements would unpack to mean, then it means that somehow you don't see the world the right way and that you should not be well thought of.

I was thinking about this, and I remember a few years ago a political candidate was asked about his view of God and he said this. He said, "I have a great relationship with God. I like to be good. I don't like to have to ask for forgiveness. I don't really have to ask for forgiveness. I don't do a lot of things that are bad and I try hard not to do anything that's bad." Now I won't tell you who the candidate was. Not that you couldn't guess, but there's a particular view there that says, you know what, I don't need forgiveness. I'm good. I'm really good. Overall, when I look at the world, I'm good.

And then if you come into a more recent debate after the Supreme Court overturned the Roe versus Wade thing, one politician who's in a prominent place, a prominent Catholic, was being refused communion because of her views on abortion. And she came out and said, I don't care that the Catholic Church condemns abortion. If you're not familiar, the Catholic Church would say abortion is sinful, it's wrong, it's murder. That's the official position that the Catholic Church has taken. And so, this lifelong Catholic says, my church can have its views, but I say that you go ahead and do it.

Now, again, my point here today isn't as much about that particular debate as it is about who's to say what's right? What's wrong? How do you know? One prominent Catholic football coach at a public university came out after that and said, "It's my faith and it's my science that tells me that I should be for all life, that every unborn life matters."

And so, the question again is who's to say, well, over time, the way that most people have thought about this is this. And that is to say, I need to figure out what's right for me. And the way that I do that is I listen to myself. The truth is inside of me. That's how most people in our culture still think about it. There might be views, and I'm going to think about it until I figure out what seems right or I'm just going to go with what my gut says. And so, this is where we basically look at the world and we say, somehow, I am the arbiter of what is true and what is right and what is good. And I will decide. I will figure it out. I'll just know.

But do you know what the problem with that view is? And that is, one, people on opposite sides of events and positions all think that they know. So, take any issue. And there are people who say, I know. And in a more extreme way of thinking about it, if you think about some things, such as school shooters. At some level they say, this

feels to me to be the best course of action for me today, because all of us act in accordance with what we believe is ultimately right and best.

Tasha Eurich, who wrote the book *Insight: Why We Are Not as Self-Aware as We Think*, said this, citing research, she said 95% of people believe that they are self-aware. In other words, 95% of us, take any group, would say, I have a pretty good idea of who I am, how I impact the world, and how I interact with people. But according to her research, only 10 to 15% of people are actually self-aware. So, what that means is the majority of people are walking around saying, I'm pretty in tune with myself, and I know what's good and right and how I interact with the world, how I impact people. But very few of us actually do, according to her.

Now, the more Christian way of thinking about this over time has always been to say that the truth is not inside of us, but it's outside of us. We don't find truth in here. We find truth outside of us. It's revealed by God through a divine act of revelation. And when we put ourselves in tune with that revelation, that's how we come to learn what is right and what is true and what is good.

We're beginning a series from Psalm 19 that we're calling *Clarity Everyday*. And the idea is to say, how do we know what is right? What is good? What is true? How do we find that truth outside of us?

Well, Psalm 19 answers that, at least in part. Here's what we see in the first six verses. We see what theologians have called general revelation. And what that simply means is that there are things that are revealed about God in nature and anybody and everybody can see what that is. Here's how it reads. Verse one, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge." And it goes on. And it talks about how we can see and sense God in nature, which is one of the ways that we sense God.

This is one of the reasons that sometimes when you see beauty, when you have a moment of maybe walking in the woods or being on a boat or standing at a beach or looking at a mountain, and you say, I sense God, that you're actually experiencing general revelation. Sometimes people will say, I feel closer to God when I'm walking in the woods than I do at church. Well, in part, that's general revelation. And it's not shocking because it doesn't mean that you don't experience God at church, but it means that sometimes when you see and sense God in nature, you are experiencing general revelation that's available to all people.

And Romans one teaches us that there is something to God written in our hearts. So sometimes the idea that says, I just sense what's right is right, because Romans one says it's written basically inside of us in a sense that we have a sense of right and wrong. Now, here kind of my logic here, what I'm not saying is that's the ultimate sense of right and wrong.

And we can go, oh, it's all inside me. But what I'm saying is sometimes, you know, that certain things are right and certain things are wrong. This is why across all different cultures, people have said, we prefer honesty to dishonesty. We prefer owning property to people stealing from us. We prefer being faithful to somebody to betrayal. It really doesn't matter about the culture or place in history. This is always been what people have said is preferable because there's a sense in which God has spoken through nature and in general revelation that we know these things to be true.

But there's also in Psalm 19, this idea of special revelation. And this is where God speaks through the Scripture. Here's what we see in verse seven. And this is in verses seven through eleven. It's in other places as well. "The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart."

And so, the idea here is that the law, the precepts, the statutes of the Lord refer to Scripture, and although this is looking at the time it was written just to the Old Testament, certainly by implication, it takes in all that we hold to be Scripture. And it says these are the things that will refresh your soul, make wise the simple, and give joy to the heart.

So, let me just ask you, do you ever feel the need for refreshment, like maybe things in this world are just wearing you down? Do you ever feel the need for greater joy, greater clarity about what direction or decisions you should make? What this is simply saying is that the Word of the Lord gives us those things and that is God's way of articulating to us what we need and what is true in terms of Scripture. And that is something we're going to look at over these weeks.

We're going to examine what is called the four characteristics of Scripture or attributes of Scripture. Different people have written about this. This isn't unique to me, and we're going to use a little acrostic out of Psalm 19 here, and the acrostic is the word "scan." And we're going to talk about the sufficiency of scripture. In other words, is it enough? Then the "c" stands for clarity. Do we understand or know what it says? "a" for authority. Is it final and for necessity? So, "scan" is sufficiency, clarity, authority, and necessity.

And what I want to do just here this morning is look at this idea of sufficiency because verse seven of Psalm 19 says, the law of the Lord is perfect and the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, those words are communicating something very clearly. The word "perfect" simply means without defects. So, God has given us His word without any defect and the word "trustworthy" in the English standard version is translated as "sure." It comes from a word that means craftsman. And what this means is God has given us His word that is completely perfect and was crafted for us so that we have exactly what it is that we need.

Here's how it's written about in the New Testament in second Timothy Chapter three, verses 16 and 17, it says "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Now there are several other places we could point to, but what you have here is you have the Psalms, you have the epistles saying, in essence, the scriptures that we have are all that we need for everything that God would ask of us.

If you were to look for a definition of sufficiency, this is what you could say that it is, and that is we have all the words that God intends now. At first, that may not seem like much of a statement to some of us because we hear that and say, well, what difference does that make? Well, you can experience God in part through general revelation without having all that you need for life.

That comes from special revelation. But once you get special revelation, then you have all that you need. I'm going to use an example that's maybe a little irreverent to this but bear with me. And that is this. If you were to say, wow, I have used Amazon Prime to shop and it's amazing because I swiped through something on my phone, I found it, I hit it, and it showed up at my door in two days. That's amazing. A decade, 15 years ago, who would have thought that I could shop that easily?

So, you can appreciate that but you don't necessarily learn how to run a business from appreciating that. But if you were able to sit with Jeff Bezos, this is the irreverent part, and say, teach me about business, and you were to kind of glean from him all that he put into building Amazon, you would go from having a general appreciation for I scan on my phone and something shows up, and I know there's good business going on here to oh my goodness, he has mastered supply chain and ripping off mom and pop stores like crazy.

Okay, I digress. My point is that general revelation is knowing something specific, something in general, and appreciating it. But specific revelation, special revelation is saying God has things for me that I need and everything that I need comes from what He says. Now, let me just take a moment and give just some very practical implications of the fact that the law of the Lord is perfect and his statutes are trustworthy.

And I have three affirmations that we take from this. The first is this, and that is we don't need to believe anything that's not taught in scripture. And here's why this is such good news for you and for me. If you hang around church or Christian people for any length of time, sooner or later you'll come across somebody who says, well, God told me this, or I have a word for you from the Lord, or I have a prophecy that God's given me for you.

And they'll say something that feels very significant, like, I should listen to this. But what the sufficiency of Scripture teaches us is that you have all of the words that God intends for you to have in the Scriptures. It's perfect, it's trustworthy, it's sure, it's crafted for you already, meaning you don't need an extra word. In the Old Testament, there was something that was called divination, where what people would do is they would try to divine the ways of God through signs and through different things.

And what this means is that you don't need to believe anything that comes from some outside source. And so, you don't need somebody telling you, this is what God says for you. That isn't part of Scripture. That doesn't mean somebody can't have an impression and try to apply Scripture. But it means you can say, if I can't point to it in Scripture, I am not compelled to believe it. And that is actually very freeing when you come to understand that, because that means, again, that nobody can say because God has given me an inspiration. So sometimes pastors, authors, and songwriters will use this or they'll say, well, God gave me something. And it's like, well, if God gave it to you, who am I to argue?

Well, God, according to the sufficiency of Scripture, doesn't give unique words to other people, for other folks. And so, you don't need to believe anything that's not taught in Scripture. Now, sometimes people will use that and it'll line up with Scripture. And you may say, boy, that feels like God prompted something. That's a different thing. But what I'm saying is you don't need to believe.

Let me give you an example of this. When my wife and I moved to Pittsburgh, so we left the church that I had been leading in Michigan, and we came here, the church that Brandon Rickard is now the pastor of. And so that's kind of a cool circle. But when we announced to people there that we were moving out, it was a woman who

came up to my wife and she said to my wife, she said, I feel like God is telling me that if you make this move, disaster awaits your family.

I'm not kidding. This was what she said. It was a word from the Lord. You should not go. Because if you go, disaster awaits your family. Now you may say, well, you fell off a roof. And, you know, I think I think there's a statute of limitations on disaster. And her point was don't go because bad things are going to happen.

Now, here's why I tell you this. If you believe in the sufficiency of scripture, it means you don't need to believe that kind of stuff when somebody tells it to you. And because we already had a belief in the sufficiency of scripture, we were able to say, I think that's more about you than it is about us or about God because we only need to believe what the Scripture says and the Scripture doesn't address that we can use wisdom to make our own decisions. By the way, we did have a conversation with her several years later. She said, "By the way, that whole thing. Do you remember when I said that to you?" Yeah, we actually kind of do. She said, "Yeah, it was kind of more about me, I think, and what I was going through at the time." And so, this is helpful to say I don't need to believe anything that is not expressly taught in Scripture.

Secondly, we aren't compelled by anything that is not taught in Scripture. Now, this is really similar to not believe, but the reason I use the word compel is it means when somebody says, here's an implication of what Scripture says or what I believe God has said, you are not compelled to act on anything that comes from outside of Scripture. You are compelled by Scripture if you're a follower of Jesus. It means that at some point you say, if Scripture says it, that settles it. But I am not compelled by implications that go a step beyond Scripture, and I'm not compelled by somebody else's impression of what God says that things should be.

Now there's a story that an older pastor talked about when he first started pastoring, and he said he was pastoring this little church, and there was a woman in the church who would call him up earlier in the week and say, I feel like God gave me a song that I need to sing this week. Like, this is God telling me to sing this song. He said I was a young pastor, and I didn't know how to deal with this. So, I thought, well, if God is telling you to sing, I guess you need to sing. And he said every single time she sang, it was awful. I would just say it would just be one of those moments where you would sit there going, this can't be of God.

And he said, it took me a while and probably losing a bunch of people attending the church before I realized that I could say the same thing back to her. And so, what I said to her one day when she called and said I feel like God's telling me to sing, he said, well, I'm not sure I've heard that from God yet. And he said, I'll tell you what, prepare your song and I'll wait and see if God tells me that you're supposed to sing.

And if so, I'll give you the thumbs up when the time comes in the service. And if not, I'll just say, you know, I haven't heard from him. And so, the time came in the service she was looking, like, should I come up and sing? And he's like, well, I had nothing.

Now he's probably hamming that up a little bit with his story. But the point is, again, you and I are not compelled by anything that is not taught expressly in Scripture. And when I talk about implications, implications are good to say Scripture teaches something. And then I infer or make implications out of it to form how I live. That is what we do from Scripture.

But it's important to be able to draw the line between what Scripture says explicitly and what the implications are and be able to say that I'm not compelled by an implication that somebody else comes up with. This is how sometimes people get into this. Well, I infer that because Scripture says "x" about, let's say, world missions, everybody should be part of this world mission because this world mission does it right.

You've heard this kind of thing. And the idea, again, is to say, no, I have to be a part of God's mission if I'm a follower of Jesus. But I don't have to be a part of your mission in the same way that you are. It's good that you feel compelled and moved to it. But I'm not compelled.

And then finally, we are not to forbid anything that isn't forbidden in Scripture. Sometimes what happens is we get to a point where we start to say, well, if Scripture is clear about this, then it means this, this, and this as well. And this is where some ideas of legalism come from. And again, I'm not suggesting that it's not good to say if "x" is true, then I should be careful with these other things.

But again, it's when we start to make universals. Let me give you one that's become well known in recent days. Maybe you've heard about the Mike Pence rule where Mike Pence says he would never be alone with a woman in any context who wasn't his wife. Now again, by the way, it didn't originate with Mike Pence. Billy Graham used to do that, but Mike Pence has had some ridicule for that.

And his idea was just to say, I'm a public figure. I never want to be in a place where I'm accused of anything that would be inappropriate. So that's just the standard I take. And to my knowledge, he hasn't said that he thinks it's universal or anything like that. But if somebody were to come along and say that should be the standard for everybody in every context, for all time.

Now, it might be a good idea. Some of us in this room might need to hear something that challenges us to say maybe I've been fast and loose with hanging out with people I shouldn't hang out with, and it's putting my marriage or my reputation in peril, and I should rethink some things. That's not what I'm saying. But if somebody tries to universalize it, then what they're doing is they're not saying Scripture is sufficient.

God has given us all the words that He intends for us to have. And so, when somebody adds by implication something you and I are not to forbid that in the same way. Does that make sense? And here's why this is important. When you understand the sufficiency of Scripture, it's freeing because what you begin to say is that God has given me everything that I need to know Him and to be fully equipped for the life that he wants me to live.

And that's really good news because it means if you hear the teaching of the Bible about salvation, you don't need to wonder, is there another word? Is somebody going to give me an extra requirement somewhere that I haven't heard of before? Or is there some loophole that I'm not aware of? What the Bible says is clear, and that is we're all sinful and we need a savior.

Ephesians two says, it's not by our words, but it's by God's grace that we're saved through faith. And because of the sufficiency of Scripture, that means that you and I don't need to say, is there something I'm missing? Is there something else that I need to do? But I can say with certainty that because Jesus died on the cross for my sins, the only thing that matters is not how I perform, but how Jesus performed. And it means that when Scripture speaks to something, I can say that settles it.

I don't know if you use GPS when you travel. It's always interesting to me how dependent we can become on GPS. A few years ago, I traveled with one of my sons to Canada and I was too cheap to pay for the international plan. So, I turned my phone off at the border and used the old-school map. And it was really interesting not to have GPS for a while because you get so used to saying, oh, I'm right here. And to actually have to look at how everything played out. But here's what is true about me with GPS. I like GPS until I don't. Do you know what I'm saying? In other words, I like it when GPS tells me to go somewhere, and I don't know everything. And I'm like, I'll follow that. But when I feel like I know a better way, do you know what I do with GPS? I quickly say I know better than the GPS.

Now here's what's true about GPS. So sometimes I actually do know better. Sometimes there are shortcuts. Sometimes there are ways that you can get around it and navigate it better than what GPS says. But if you had an absolutely foolproof GPS, if Scripture was your absolutely foolproof GPS, what that means is that rather than

simply saying, I'll use it to validate what I like and I'll reject it when it contradicts what I want, I will say this is what I will follow at every turn.

And if you believe that Scripture is sufficient, then what you will be able to do is say, even when it doesn't seem to me that this is the best way forward, I'm going to choose to follow it because this is God's loving instruction for the best way for me to navigate my life. Then what you will do is you will navigate those moments by saying, I trust the positioning rather than going a different way now.

Clearly, the Bible doesn't address every last detail of our lives. If you're stranded on a desert island, you might say, I want a Bible. You might also say, If I could only have one book, I'd want how to build a boat. But to everything that Scripture speaks, you can say, God has given me all the words that I intend. And so, when His word speaks, that settles it for me. Instead of saying, I think I know a better way. And our human tendency is to sometimes say, I think I know a better way. I think I want a different path. But it's from Scripture that we can get a perspective on our past strength for today, and hope for the future. It's from Scripture that we can learn how to navigate the depths of our relationships and how to navigate our emotional ups and downs in life.

Over these last two months, I have found myself craving the Scriptures as I've walked through these moments. What I've wanted is to reread and re-see what God says. But there's another layer to that. Not just that I needed those words, but there are also the words that you've known for years that gave guidance and direction and perspective in the midst of what for me was a dark time, especially with the broader scare that was there.

And so, all I want to say to you today is that if you will give yourself to the reading, understanding, and applying of Scripture, it is God's loving gift to say, here are the words you need to bring clarity to everything that you believe and are compelled to do and everything that you say this will forbid me from it because this is God's loving word to me. And that's what I hope we'll do consistently as a church.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank you for each person who's gathered today. And God, I ask that you would help each one of us to see that you have given your word to us as a loving gift to help us navigate this world that we live in and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Just before you go, I just want to mention that we have some groups that are meeting this summer, and if you're part of a group that goes on, but maybe you take the summer off or you've never tried a group, we have some five-week groups that will

go just for the time of this series, some in-person, some virtual, here at our Wexford campus.

And you can contact our Adult Ministry Team, Russ Brasher or Emily D'Angelo, and they will help you get connected to a group. If you're part of a group, we are also using this book, *Taking God at His Word* by Kevin DeYoung. That takes kind of another step into the things we're talking about. This scan idea of sufficiency, clarity, authority, and necessity. And so even if you just on your own want to say, I'd like to learn more or take another step into kind of the learning over these weeks, that's a way that you can do it. Thanks for being here. Have a great day.