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Title: *Clarity Everyday: Pleasing to God, Part 2*

Scripture: Psalm 19:12-14

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Good morning and welcome again to Orchard Hill. So, if you haven't been around this summer, I missed a part of the summer here at church because I had a mishap in the early part of this summer, and I've been recovering and getting stronger each week.

And this last week, I decided it was time to get on a bike because I hadn't done any cardio activity for a long time. This was my idea of cardio trying to just start rebuilding and everything that goes with it. And so, I start to ride my bike and as I'm riding, I'm going on a route that I've been on many times. I've often run this route. I've ridden my bike on this route and on this route there's a house that I go past that has a whole pack of dogs.

Do you know this kind of house? Have you ever been near this? And as I was riding by, the dogs in the past would come out when I would run by, ride by, whatever it would be, and they would bark and chase a little bit and just kind of come near. But never any real instance.

And I would always do the, oh, you're a good boy, you're a good dog, and that would seem to pacify them. And so, I'm on my bike, I'm riding, and this dog comes out and it starts chasing after me. I do the whole you're a good boy and it bites me. I did nothing. I'm riding by and this dog bites me.

And so, I got off my bike. I'm probably not in my best frame of mind at this moment, and I rebuke the dog. Evidently, I did it loudly enough that the owner came out of the house. I've met this woman a few times and have had exchanges about the dogs and stuff like that, no other context.

And at first, her reaction was my dog couldn't have done that. And I point, and I say, well, right here, and I'm bleeding down my calf from where the dog bit me. And I said the dog bit me, and she's like, oh my goodness, my dog bit you. And she turned from being slightly argumentative to apologetic and then she starts rebuking her dog and saying, you're a bad dog, don't do that. And she goes through this whole iteration.

So, here's my question for you. Do you think the owner was pleased with her dog at that moment? Now, some of you probably say, well, yeah, you were riding by her

house, you deserved it. But most of us would say no. She probably was not pleased with her dog at that moment.

And if you're a dog owner or a pet owner, if you've ever had a pet, here's what you know. And that is when you first get a dog, get a pet, you have a moment where you say, this dog, this pet's going to be a little bit of an inconvenience. I'm not sure I'm pleased with them but we're taking this pet into our house. And then your pet becomes the object of your love. And yet your pet still does things from time to time that pleases you and displeases you.

And here's why I start this way. Because even when your dog does something like bites a passerby on a bike, what you'll end up doing about an hour later is you'll be like, who's a good girl? And the reason we get back to that is that positionally, that dog, that cat, has become something that we say you have a place, a position that you are pleasing to me, even if what you do, doesn't please me.

You heard George just a moment ago reference the fact that we're coming to the end of a series in which we've been in Psalm 19, and we've worked our way through the Psalm, we've talked about Scripture and how we relate to Scripture, and the four characteristics of Scripture that have been around for years that people have articulated sufficiency, clarity, authority, necessity.

And last week we talked about the idea of being pleasing to God. And we looked at verses 12 and 13 specifically, and we talked about four types of sin, how there's sin that sometimes we're ignorant of, and how we can do sin that's hidden, willful, and rebellious. And today we're calling this *Pleasing to God, Part Two*. I don't normally do a part two where I say, go back and listen and all of that.

But the reason this is a part two is because this idea of being pleasing to God is tied up in verse 14, where David, the author of this Psalm, the human author, says this. He says, "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."

And so, what he's not doing, I believe, is simply saying, you know what, since I'm forgiven, let all of my words be pleasing, let my thoughts be pleasing. He's not saying it because I can't please you. I'm forgiven; therefore, I'm pleasing. But he's talking about actual words, actual thoughts. And this is a question, and I talked about this last week, and I'm just going to take a moment here to talk about it again, especially if you were not around.

And that is, am I able to please God? Let me just show you two sections of Roman's New Testament book that speak to this. This is Romans three, verse ten. It says this, "There is no one righteous, not even one." Nobody's pleasing to God. And then verse 19 and 20, "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin."

So, what does it say? It's the law that makes us aware that we can't keep the law, and that we're not pleasing to God. So, on one hand, positionally, you cannot please God, period. But once you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you are pleasing to God because of what Jesus Christ has done.

And then there's a sense like the dog, that you can still do things that are pleasing or displeasing to God. Let me just show you one instance, and there are dozens that I could show you from the New Testament. Let me just show you one. Romans 12, same author as chapter three. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

And so, on one hand, if you understand biblical theology, there is nothing that you can do that will please God. And that is why we come to Jesus as our Savior. That's what the law is all about. But on the other hand, there's a sense in which the choices that we make, the way that we choose to live, have a real impact on the God of the universe. And so, the question really in many ways is what does it look like for you or for me to live in a way that's pleasing to God?

And we talked, as I said last week, a bit about this idea of sin. And one of the things that we sometimes do, one of the reasons that this can be a challenging question, is sometimes we confuse the means of obedience. In other words, what it is accomplishing versus the end of obedience, is that it's the result of understanding God's goodness to us.

And so, what I'd like to do is simply look at this idea of our words and the meditations of our heart, our thoughts, and ask the question, are they pleasing to God? And as we look at that, speak about how they can be pleasing to God, because here this is a prayer. He talks about these four types of sin.

And then his prayer is, Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, and speak about how and then consider this together. So first, are our words pleasing to God? So let me just point to again a few New Testament passages that speak about our words.

Mark chapter seven, verses six and seven. It says, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules." And so, what Jesus does when he says this is he says it's possible that your lips express praise, but your hearts are far from me, that you attend church and you sing loudly words of worship. And yet it isn't what's in your heart or words you speak about following Jesus, but it's not what is reality in your life. And He says, this kind of insincerity is not pleasing to God.

Then in James chapter three, we read this, verse two, "We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check." So, our words are an indicator of everything else that is going on inside our hearts and inside our life. James 3:9-11, "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?"

The idea is no, they can't. And so again, he's driving at this idea of sincerity here and the idea that our mouths are made to worship God. And then in Second Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 20, it says this, "For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. And these are all sins of the tongue."

What he's doing here is he's saying the words that are pleasing to God are sincere. They're worshipful, they're pointed at God, and they don't do harm. They're not full of discord or quarreling. They're not full of jealousy where we end up not being for other people. They're not full of outbursts of anger, which you understand how that destroys. They're not full of slander and arrogance, and they're not full of factions or disorderly conduct.

And so, our words can be pleasing or displeasing to God. Now, there are some people who feel that the way our words are pleasing to God is when we speak things into existence or proclaim Jesus over something. Brian Houston, who led a well-known church for years, doesn't lead it anymore, once put it like this, and I disagree with how he's putting this. I just want to make that clear. He said, "Your words can frame your future. Speak your faith, start seeing miracles. Owner of your first home,

bestselling author, mother of handsome sons and beautiful daughters, businessman who's prosperous and fruitful. Speak it into being. Speak it into being. Amen.”

And here's why I say I don't agree with how he states this, because ultimately what he's saying is this, that the words that are pleasing to God are words that are saying God, I'm proclaiming this and I'm speaking something into existence. But the problem with this is always when people have this mindset about speaking things into existence, it's always something that makes much of them in some ways.

I mean, they'll say it's about making much of God, but is it always God's will that we have handsome sons and beautiful daughters? I mean, we'd all prefer that, right? But some of us have homely sons and homely daughters, and that's no less to God's delight than if they're handsome or beautiful. In fact, some of our kids may not be successful in business. They may not live a life free from disability.

And when you say it's God's will and I can speak it into existence, what you're doing is you're creating a mindset that says, If I just have enough faith, then this will be the outcome. And what happens then is when you live in a place where we don't have handsome sons and daughters or we don't have any sons and daughters, or we don't get married, or we have a child and the child struggles with all kinds of challenges, we start to say, God somehow let me down when it might be God's word and words of praise, words that are authentic, are saying not God I'm demanding that you do something as much as it is saying God, I worship you regardless of what you're doing. I may not like this outcome. I may ask you for something different, but it's different than saying I will speak it into existence. And so, our words are pleasing, sincere, and worshipful, and they don't do harm.

And I would also say that our words ultimately come from the heart and that what we talk about tells people around us and ourselves what's most important to us. If we're always talking about the market and what direction the market is going, is it up? Is it down? What's most important to us is the market and our assets, our money. If we're always talking about politics, what's most important to us is the political debate of the day. If we're always talking about our kids or our grandkids, what's most important to us is our kids or our grandkids.

And it's not that those things aren't important. It's not that they shouldn't be a topic of conversation. It's not even that they shouldn't be a huge topic of conversation. It's that if that is our primary topic of conversation, it's our primary object of worship. And God wants our primary object of worship to be Him and words that are pleasing to him reflect a heart that says God, you are worth more than the market, than my

grandchildren, than even my own situations, health, or well-being. And until we come to that point, our words reveal something. So, our words can be pleasing to God.

And then the second question is, are our thoughts pleasing to God and exactly how if our thoughts are meditations of our heart lead our mouth? And in fact, I love the word meditation. And it's used in Psalm chapter one in this way, verse one and two, says this, "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."

So, who's the person who's blessed? The one who doesn't walk, sit or stand with sinners. And those are all words for people who have an agenda against God. But instead meditates, thinks about, mulls over, and thinks on the law of the Lord day and night. It's what is on their mind all the time.

And so, you could say that what's important when it comes to our thoughts is what are we filling our thoughts with. Is it the word of God, the law of the Lord day and night, or is it a lot of other stuff? In fact, in Psalm 19, when he says, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be pleasing in your sight, part of what he's doing, if you read through the Psalm, is he saying, I've talked about your splendor in creation, but it's also in how you've revealed yourself in your word. And it is your Word that is going to give me the meditations of the heart that are worthy of you and direct my life. Give me clarity for every day.

But I don't think it's just our content because you can do a lot of content by yourself and still miss part of what God has for you. And this is why in Psalm one, again, he says, blessed is the one who does not walk, does not stand, does not sit in the company of the scoffer or the person who's got an agenda against God. Because the people that we surround ourselves with impact our lives. In fact, I heard somebody once say show me your best friends and I'll show you your future. Show me your five best friends and I'll see your future five years from now.

The people that we're around, the decisions they make, the things they value, and the advice they give impact us. And this is part of why as a church, we continue to emphasize ways to get involved or to connect, because community matters.

I heard somebody put it this way. They said that a horse can haul or carry behind it 6,000 lbs. by itself. I don't know if this is true, and I'm sure there's some variation in horses. So, it's a typical statement. With another horse, it can haul 15,000 lbs., but if the horses are related to one another, they can haul 18,000 lbs. So, a horse by itself is

not as strong as two horses that are randomly put together, but two horses that know each other form the best kind of team to move forward.

And so, when we talk about getting involved here at our Wexford campus, there are over 100 groups. There are different study opportunities, and there are ways to serve. And what we're talking about is saying don't just journey alone, because when you journey with other people, you become stronger and the meditations of your heart become better. We are doing a study this fall, one that we're doing virtually so that it makes it as easy as possible. A low bar of entry in terms of you don't have to drive to a campus. It's a Psalm study talking about navigating the highs and lows of life and it starts in just a couple of weeks. It's for six weeks. It would be a simple step to say, I want to journey with some people.

And I know that some of us who are here are saying, well, I tried a group once and I didn't like all the people. I didn't agree with all the people. Well, here's the thing. If you agree with everyone and you insist on everyone agreeing with you, you will soon be in a church of one. I know there are some things that are essential that we talk about and agree upon, but there are a lot of things where we have differences, and those differences are part of what makes us strong.

In the Proverbs, we're told about iron sharpening iron. The idea of iron sharpening iron is that there's a different point of view, a different perspective that comes together and it sharpens you. It makes you better. Sometimes being with people who don't see the world just like you will help you to be a better follower of Jesus Christ than you are if you do it in isolation.

This is part of why we have student groups, why we have 7:24 and Collide because if you're a student, you are making decisions about the future of your life and the direction that things will go. And doing it with trusted mentors and other people who have similar values is of incredible value. And so, these are part of the ways that we form our thinking, our thoughts to be pleasing to God, the content, and the community.

And then I would say contrition. And what I mean here is just whenever we recognize that we're not aligned, that our world is not according to True North, we turn and adjust. That's been kind of the point of this whole series talking about clarity every day, talking about coming to a point where we say whatever it is that God says, this is what I will adjust my life to rather than it being about me.

Now, I would guess, just as we've talked about this, that there are a couple of different ways that we react. And one of them is, well, okay, my words aren't always

on point and my thoughts aren't always right. Therefore, I can't please God. Therefore, I just get forgiven. And that's just how my cycle goes. And I understand that because that would be an easy way to think about this. But I love how this passage moves us beyond that. And here's what I mean. He says, may these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. And then notice what he says, Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

There's a book that came out several years ago, and the author, in writing about why we don't feel worthy, talked about the issue of shame. And as she talked about shame, she identified a lot of areas where we feel shame. Here's just one of the lists that appeared in her book. She said this. "I'll be worthy when I lose 20 lbs. I'll be worthy if I can get pregnant. I'll be worthy if and when I can stay sober. I'll be worthy if everyone thinks I'm a good parent. I'll be worthy when I make a living selling my art. I'll be worthy if I can hold my marriage together. I'll be worthy when I make partner. I'll be worthy when my parents finally approve. I'll be worthy if he calls me back and asks me out. I'll be worthy when I can do it all and look like I'm not even trying."

And here was her point as she wrote about this. She said, there are so many things that we put into our lives and say, I'll be enough, I'll be worthy when, and when we don't feel it, what we do is instead is, we feel shame. I'm not enough today because I haven't lost 20 lbs. I didn't have the pregnancy. She didn't ask me out. He didn't ask me out. I didn't make partner. I can't do it all and look like I've got it all together. Therefore, I'm not enough.

And here was her solution. Her solution was, just tell yourself you're enough. I saved you the purchase of a book right there. And here's why I point this out. Because have you ever tried that? Have you ever just tried to say, you know what, 20 lbs. or not, I'm all good?

Well, what happens is it works for a little while and then you say, well, okay, if it isn't that, it's something else, but there's something that I need in order to feel good about myself. And what some people do is then they just transfer this to a Christian thing and they say, well, when I can get my words under control enough, when I can think well enough about the things of God, then I'll be worthy and we make everything worthy.

And this is why I love how this passage ends because he says may these words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Now, what's a rock? If you said a rock, you're correct. Obviously here this is Scripture using an image to create a sense of what God is like.

And the word that is used here specifically in Hebrew was a word in which people would say, this is a rock that I will go to for security. It's where I'll hide from a storm. And so, this is a stand-in for security and significance in a sense. And what happens for many of us is when we feel desperate, then we seek our own security, our own significance, our own rock, and therefore we go about life saying, when I get, then I'll be enough.

And sometimes we even do it spiritually. But we haven't made God our rock. And when we're desperate, we say, well, if I can get enough of this, then I'll feel like enough. And when I feel like enough, then I'll be okay. But there are always temporary rocks, so our desperation leads us to seek rocks. Sometimes our success leads us to think we don't need a rock.

Some of us, as we gather this, we can say, you know what, my relational world, it's all really good. My financial world, my career, everything's as it should be. I don't need a rock because I have enough. But there's probably still, at least at some point in your life, a place where there's a sense in which you're quiet, you say, if I had this or if this worked out, then I would feel like enough.

Spiritually, what the meditations of our heart and the words of our mouth lead us to or come from more than they lead us to, is what is our ultimate rock. And the meditation of our hearts, the words of our mouth that will be most pleasing to God and best for us, is when we can say God is my rock. And not only that, He's my redeemer. This is a beautiful word. That means one who buys us back from the market when we can't buy our own freedom. God through Jesus Christ is the Redeemer. So, when I'm not pleasing to God, when I'm the dumb dog that chases the rider by and bites him and I'm displeasing to God, God is the Redeemer in Jesus Christ who has made it possible for us to still be pleasing to God positionally.

You see, your security isn't that you do enough, and then God loves you. It's that God is the beauty and the security. But Jesus has made it possible for you and for me to live positionally in that place so that I can say I want to please you, not as a means, but as an end, because I know that that is ultimately best for me as well. Because as I position my life around the things that God says, what happens is now God as the Creator, the one who's made us, has allowed me to align my life with what he wants. And that is where we will find our greatest joy.

You know, if you had a friend who invited you to go on a hike of the Appalachian Trail, some of us who are gathered here would say, that's awesome. Let me gather some stuff. You know, I'd have to go to the store and pick some things out, but I'm ready. Let's go. I can't wait. For some of us, we'd say, well, four or five months of

hiking, I should probably do some training. I should do something to get ready for that.

But here's what's for sure true. And that is, whatever you would do to prepare for that hike is not the hike, it's preparation. And the meditation of your heart and the words of your mouth are ultimately the things that prepare you to encounter the beauty of God. Because it's when you encounter God as your rock and your redeemer, and that is the meditation of your heart and the words of your mouth, that you can address the sin in your life. And it's then that all of a sudden, instead of saying when I salvage my marriage, when my situation in life changes, when, when, when, then I'll be enough, that you say it is because of what Jesus Christ has done and who God is that I have confidence in this life because this life isn't everything for me. That you will be living in a different place than where you live when you're constantly trying to get something out of every word and every thought. And so, the discipline for our minds and our words isn't a discipline to itself, but it's to see and savor the glory and the beauty of God.

And that's what Scripture does. And that's how it frees me. How it frees you to live not just in a positionally pleasing place to God, but often practically in a displeasing and pleasing way. But to say what I want more than anything is to live in that place where my words and my thoughts are pleasing to you. I mean, it's a prayer, my Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight. Because ultimately you are my rock, you are my redeemer. I have nowhere else to go.

Father. We thank you for how you want to be our rock and our redeemer. And God, I confess how many times I look to other things to be my rock, how many times I try to have other things give me some kind of validation or security or significance. And God, I pray for me and for each person who's gathered that our clarity would come in being able to articulate and see those things and turn to you. The only certain rock. And we pray it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great weekend.