Psalm 12

"Words Matter"

1. Intro

- a. This morning, we are going to dig right into our Scripture passage, so go ahead and turn to Psalm 12
- b. Psalm 12:1-8
 - i. To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David. ¹Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. ²Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. ³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ⁴those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?" ⁵"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." ⁶The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. ⁷You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. ⁸On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.
- c. To understand what David is saying in this Psalm, we need to go back to the story that most commentators believe led to him writing this hymn
 - i. This story is found in 1 Samuel 21-22
 - ii. It is in these chapters that we first find David on the run from King Saul
 - 1. After being warned by Saul's son, Jonathan, that the King was going to try to take his life, David fled to a place called Nob
 - a. At Nob, David encountered the priest of that town, whose name was Ahimelech
 - i. Ahimelech believed that David was on a mission from the King, so he supplied David and his men with the holy bread that he had there with him
 - ii. Not only that, but Ahimelech also had the sword of Goliath stashed away there as well
 - 1. How's that for God's providential timing and placement!!
 - b. Unfortunately, there was another man lurking there in Nob, a man named Doeg (doe-ayg)
 - i. We find out in 1 Samuel 21:7 that Doeg was the chief of Saul's herdsmen
 - 1. So Doeg sees David come to Nob, and he sees all that Ahimelech does for him
 - 2. When we turn to 1 Samuel 22, we find that David fled to the land of Moab, and then eventually made his way back to the land of Judah
 - a. We also see that Saul is furious that no one is giving him any info on where David has escaped to as well as the fact that it was his very own son who betrayed him to David
 - i. No one is on the king's side in that moment
 - 1. So Doeg decides to step up and be the hero
 - b. In verses 9-10 Doeg says,
 - *i.* ⁹"I saw the son of Jesse [that's David] coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, ¹⁰and he inquired of the LORD for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."
 - c. Poor Ahimelech is summoned before Saul, and he tries to tell the King that he had no idea David had supposedly turned against him, but Saul would not listen
 - i. And King Saul, in his fury, ordered his men to not only kill Ahimelech, but all the priests that were there with him
 - ii. Saul's guards wisely refused his order, so he turned to his new friend Doeg and told him to do it instead
 - d. And on that day, Doeg not only killed Ahimelech, but he also slaughtered 84 other priests

- i. And just to show how vile he truly was, Doeg then traveled back to Nob, and verse 19 tells us that "he put to the sword both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey, and sheep."
 - 1. All because one priest innocently fed and supplied the man who he thought was the hero of the kingdom
- e. And verse 22 explains the depths of David's grief, as he says to the one son of Ahimelech who escaped, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house."
- d. This sheds some light on this short Psalm of lament, doesn't it?
 - i. When David says in verse 1, "Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone..." he is likely mourning the death of the priest, Ahimelech
 - ii. When he goes on and says that, "the faithful have vanished from among the children of man," he is likely grieving the violent murder of the 84 other priests
 - iii. And when he says in verse 3 that "the poor are plundered," and "the needy groan," he is likely lamenting over the men and women, the children and infants, who were all killed in Nob
 - 1. Vileness was truly exalted among men on that day, through the hands of one man, Doeg the Edomite
- e. Interestingly though, as vile as Doeg's ACTIONS were, David's focus in this Psalm at least, were on the WORDS that surrounded those tragic days
 - i. And we see in Psalm 12 three categories of words, which make up our main points for this sermon
 - 1. The words of the wicked
 - 2. The words of the needy
 - 3. The words of the Lord
- 2. First, we'll look at the words of the wicked
 - a. The words of the wicked are LYING words
 - i. In verse 2, David says, "Everyone utters lies to his neighbor..."
 - ii. The word David uses for "uttering lies" is a word that conveys the idea of emptiness and vanity
 - 1. In fact, this is the very same word that God uses in Exodus 20:7, as He is giving Moses the Ten Commandments, and He says to Moses...
 - a. ⁷"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God IN VAIN, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name IN VAIN.
 - 2. I want to push back on a popular Christian tradition here...
 - a. Let me be very clear... I am not a fan AT ALL of people using either God's name or Jesus' name as a cuss word
 - i. I think it is VERY foolish, and VERY dangerous to use either one of these holy and majestic names in an expression of profanity
 - iii. BUT, I do not think that is what the Lord meant in the third commandment
 - 1. I believe that when God says to us to not take His name in vain, He is saying "Do not utter lies about who I am, and do not utter lies about who YOU are, in relationship to ME."
 - a. And sadly, the reality is that we hear these lying and vain words about God ALL AROUND US, each and every day
 - i. Think about the statistics I shared with you all last Sunday, when we looked at some of the statements from the Ligonier State of Theology survey
 - ii. Those were MIND-BLOWING numbers, weren't they?
 - 1. To see how a rapidly increasing number of people no longer believe Jesus was God
 - 2. Or to see how more and more people think the Bible is just a collection of ancient myths
 - b. And then to realize that EVERYONE in these polls were supposedly CHRISTIANS
 - 2. Supposed CHRISTIANS, men and women who are claiming to be new creations in Christ, saying that Jesus was just a normal man, and not God in the flesh

- 3. Supposed CHRISTIANS, men and women claiming to have the Spirit of God dwelling within them, saying that the Bible cannot be literally true, and that much of it should be read the same way we read a good fiction novel
- iv. My friends, THIS is what it means to take the Lord's name in vain... THIS is what it means to utter lying words
 - 1. To claim that the God of all Creation has regenerated your heart, given you new life, and forgiven you from all your sin because of the sacrifice of His Son upon the cross
 - a. And then you look at His Word and scoff at it and mock its reliability and sufficiency?!?
 - i. These are lying words of the most heinous kinds and they are happening at an alarming rate, IN THE CHURCH
- v. We must beware of the LYING words of the wicked
- b. Second, the words of the wicked are HYPOCRITICAL words
 - i. Look at the second part of verse 2, where David writes,
 - 1. "... with flattering lips and a double heart they speak."
 - a. It's interesting when you look at this verse in the original Hebrew, for David literally says, "... with flattering lips and with a heart and a heart they speak."
 - 2. With a heart and a heart...
 - a. The imagery David is conveying here is plain for us to see
 - i. Where we would say today that someone is "two-faced," David would say that they are "two-hearted"
 - 1. They are HYPOCRITICAL in their words
 - ii. The clear biblical example for this type of behavior are the Pharisees, right?
 - 1. The Pharisees get a bad rap in the church today, because we know the other side of the
 - story we can read in our Bibles what was truly in their hearts
 - a. But, for the Jewish people of those days, the Pharisees were EXEMPLARY models of obedience
 - i. They were the ones who seemed to care THE MOST about the holiness of God
 - ii. They were the ones who seemed to care THE MOST about keeping the laws of the Lord
 - iii. They were held in great honor and respect by many within the Jewish people
 - iii. But, if we turn to Matthew 23, we find that these men spoke "with a heart and a heart"
 - 1. We don't have time to unpack this whole chapter, but in it, Jesus unleashes upon the Pharisees and the scribes 7 "woes" for their behavior
 - a. In six of these woes, Jesus begins by saying "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"
 - b. And in the other, he says, "Woe to you, blind guides!"
 - i. Why did Jesus speak so harshly to these leaders who were so respected in the community?
 - 2. We see in verses 2-5,
 - a. ²"The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵They do all their deeds to be seen by others.
 - i. In verse 13, Jesus accuses them of shutting the kingdom of heaven in people's faces
 - ii. In verse 15, Jesus says that the converts these Pharisees make are twice as much "children of hell" as they are
 - iii. And in verses 27 and 28, Jesus calls them "whitewashed tombs... full of hypocrisy and lawlessness"

- 3. The scribes and the Pharisees spoke with one heart, but they acted with another
 - a. They were hypocrites, and Jesus did not hesitate to call them what they were
- iv. My friends, we must also beware of the hypocritical, double-hearted words of the wicked in our day as well
 - 1. These are the words of the antichrists we spoke of a couple of weeks ago
 - a. Men and women who speak words that seem to be true and seem to be grounded in the Scriptures, but their lives do not match the words that they proclaim
 - i. Instead of honoring God with their hearts, they honor wealth and greed and luxury
 - ii. Instead of pursuing Christ with their hearts, they pursue fame and popularity and followers on Instagram
 - iii. Instead of holding the Word of God up as the ultimate truth by which we are to live our lives, they instead hold up their witty sermon illustrations, and clever gimmicks to get people in the door
 - 2. The words of the hypocritical religious leaders of our day today are exceedingly dangerous
 - a. For these religious leaders are claiming converts by the tens of thousands
 - i. And if Jesus says that the converts of the scribes and Pharisees were twice as much children of hell as they were, what will he say about the converts of the false teachers of today?
 - 3. Beware of those who speak with a heart and a heart
 - a. Beware of the hypocritical words of the wicked
- c. And third, the words of the wicked are BOASTFUL words
 - i. In verses 3 and 4, David writes,
 - 1. ³May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts, ⁴those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?"
 - ii. It has been said that the day in which we live today could easily be labeled as "the Age of Narcissism"
 - 1. Everything is about ME...
 - a. I want what I want
 - b. Don't tread on MY rights
 - c. I am the most important person in the room
 - 2. Unfortunately, this attitude has also found its way into the church, hasn't it?
 - a. We see this at the congregational level, when we see Christians hop around from church to church not because of solid, biblical reasoning, but instead because this church no longer meets MY needs
 - 3. But where this pride and narcissism causes the most damage is when it finds its way into the leadership of the church
 - a. When it is no longer the Word of God that drives the direction of the church, but it is instead the vision and the innovation of the pastor that steers and guides every agenda...
 - b. When it is no longer the Holy Spirit that changes and transforms hearts, but it is instead the winning personality and charisma of the pastor that ultimately saves people...
 - c. When it is no longer the authority of Christ through his holy Scriptures that provides the foundation for the church, but it is instead the authority of the pastor who dictates all decisions that are made, and those who do not comply are immediately cast as troublemakers...
 - 4. This kind of boastful narcissism is permeating the church today, as men who have been entrusted with the care of the flocks of Jesus, instead say, "With MY tongue we will prevail... who is master over ME?"
 - iii. In Psalm 52, we read in the title of this Psalm that it is a Song of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, 'David has come to the house of Abimelech"
 - 1. David writes in verses 1-4,

- a. ¹Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day. ²Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit. ³You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking what is right. ⁴You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.
- 2. Doeg's tongue was like a sharp razor, and he loved all words that devour
 - a. His words were boastful words... prideful words... narcissistic words
 - i. And these words DEVOURED all those around him
- iv. My friends, when our churches become filled with boastful, and prideful, and narcissistic words, then our churches will be devoured as well
 - 1. We have seen it happen firsthand, and it is a tragic thing to witness
 - a. We must beware of the boastful words of the wicked
 - b. We must beware of the hypocritical words of the wicked
 - c. And we must beware of the lying words of the wicked
 - i. For these are the words of those who would look at the grace and mercy and lovingkindness of God our Father, poured out to men through the death of His own Son, Jesus Christ, and then turn and reject all of it
 - 2. So how does the Christian respond in light of the lying and hypocritical and boastful words of the wicked?
- 3. Let's turn now to our second point, the words of the NEEDY
 - a. In verse 5, we read this,
 - *i.* ⁵ "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."
 - 1. How do the needy respond when the words of the wicked are exalted among the children of man?
 - a. They respond with words of GROANING
 - ii. This word for groaning is only used two other times in the Psalms, in Psalm 79:11 and Psalm 102:20
 - 1. In both of these cases, it is referring to the groaning of the prisoners... the groaning of the afflicted... the groaning of the oppressed
 - 2. And in both of these cases, just as God does with the needy in Psalm 12:5, He HEARS
 - a. He ARISES
 - b. And He SAVES
 - b. This is the pattern that we see ALL throughout the Old Testament, isn't it?
 - i. God's people become surrounded by the wicked
 - ii. God's people groan before him
 - iii. And God hears, and He arises, and He saves
 - 1. This pattern happened in Egypt
 - 2. It happened during the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness
 - 3. It happened in the Promised Land
 - 4. It happened in exile
 - a. God's people become surrounded by the wicked
 - b. God's people groan before him
 - c. And God hears, and He arises, and He saves
 - c. My friends, the pattern HAS NOT CHANGED!
 - i. Turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, and we'll look at verses 18-25...
 - ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this

hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

- ii. Do you see the pattern?
 - 1. Paul is talking about the sufferings of this present time, as we Christians are the poor and the afflicted and the needy
 - a. And how do we respond to these afflictions?
 - i. With groanings!
 - b. WHY do we groan?
 - i. Well, Paul says that we groan because we have HOPE!
 - 1. We groan because we know that God ALWAYS hears the groanings of His children
 - 2. God ALWAYS arises on their behalf
 - 3. And God ALWAYS saves!
- d. In the face of all the wicked words that threaten to engulf us, we don't retaliate with our words
 - i. We don't shout out words of frustration or confusion
 - ii. We don't reply with words of anger or hatred or bitterness
 - 1. We GROAN before our Father
 - a. For our hope is in the fact that we are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, and for the redemption of our bodies
 - b. And it is in this hope that we were saved
 - i. So we take our groanings, we take our longings, and we lay them before the throne of our great God
 - 1. And He will hear... He will arise... and He will save
 - 2. How can we be SO sure of these things?
- 4. As we look at our final point, the words of the Lord, we see this unshakeable truth:
 - a. The words of the Lord are PURE words
 - i. David writes in Psalm 12:6-7
 - ⁶The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. ⁷You, O LORD, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever.
 - b. Why do words matter, as the title of this sermon says?
 - i. Because we know without a shadow of a doubt that the Lord WILL keep His word. Period.
 - 1. Look at the certainty of David's words in these verses
 - a. The words of the Lord are PURE words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times
 - i. If you've ever seen silver or gold being purified over a fire, you know that the dross, or the impurities, always rise to the top of the container
 - 1. The metalsmith then has to take a ladle, and carefully scoop out all of those impurities
 - 2. Each time the silver is reheated, there are less and less impurities within it, until you finally are left with a pure product
 - b. David says that the words of the Lord are pure, like silver refined in a furnace seven times
 - i. The picture is one of absolute perfection
 - 1. When we look at the words of the Lord, we will not find any error
 - a. We will not find any contradictions
 - b. We will not find any inconsistencies
 - ii. And in the context of what David is writing about in Psalm 12, we will not find ANY unkept promises
 - 1. In contrast to the lying words of the wicked, the words of the Lord are TRUE
 - 2. In contrast to the hypocritical words of the wicked, the words of the Lord PROVEN
 - 3. And in contrast to the boastful words of the wicked, the words of the Lord... are boastful?
 - a. Yes, they are boastful

- b. But they are boastful in the most excellent of ways, for there is nothing more worthy of boasting in than God Himself!!
 - i. And if our God promises to arise on behalf of His children, He will keep that word
 - ii. And He will guard us from this generation FOREVER
- c. My friends, just as David wrote in this Psalm in verse 8,
 - i. On every side of us the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man
 - 1. Doeg was exalted by King Saul, because Doeg was a lying, hypocritical, and boastful man
 - a. And that was just the kind of man Saul needed to carry out his evil plans
 - b. But guess what?
 - i. Aside from the mention of Doeg in the title of Psalm 52, we never hear of this vile man again
 - ii. He disappeared from the picture, as God arose, God heard, and God saved
 - ii. We live in a day of truly wicked words, don't we?
 - 1. But, as followers of Christ, we are not called to fight back with our words
 - 2. We are called to lay our groanings at HIS feet
 - a. And his promises are true, as pure as silver refined in the furnace seven times
 - i. God will keep His word
 - 1. God WILL hear
 - 2. God WILL arise
 - 3. And God WILL save
 - iii. Therefore, as we heard in the Scripture reading at the beginning of the service,
 - 1. Let the words of OUR mouths and the meditations of OUR hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer
 - a. Brothers and sisters, our words matter, for our words are an overflow of what is truly in our heart
 - i. Will we speak the words of the wicked?
 - ii. Or will we speak the pure words of the Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer?
 - b. May OUR words be found TRUE
 - c. May OUR words be found GENUINE
 - d. May OUR words be found HUMBLE, as we are a people who boast in NOTHING except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!