

8th November 2020

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

“God is Good”

Summary: The goodness of God does not depend on what is happening in your life.

Our thought and prayers have been with Dale and Margaret this past week as they celebrated the life of Margaret’s sister Wilma. Due to COVID 19 just 20 people gathered in the Chapel of Tobin Brothers Funerals in Berwick.

Now, we are faced with coming to terms with the home calling of our dear sister Olive Addicott. An opportunity will be given for a representative of Montrose to be present with the family at the funeral, but I’m sure we need a special time together to reflect upon her life and celebrate our partnership with the Addicotts over several decades. We maybe able to get a copy of the service, and share a time of thanksgiving and closure when we are able to meet together. We will work on some appropriate way to grieve together as arrangements unfold. Thank you to all who have supported and loved her in so many practical ways in the 10 years since Ted passed away. Please uphold the family in our prayers.

Over the next four Sundays we will be focusing on the Psalms. We begin with one of my favourites, Psalm 34. In fact, v3-5 have been an inspiration to Nola and I over our 50+ years of marriage:

*“Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame”.*

Let’s Pray: Father, today we take time to say thank you for your goodness to each and every one of us. We are living in some challenging times but I say thank you for loving us and providing for us and allowing your presence to be our strength and power in a time of unrest and instability. I am glad you are the rock that holds us together and you are our ever-present help in times like these. Please speak to each of us afresh today that we may know your goodness, and offer up to you worship and praise. In Jesus Name Amen.

Please turn to and read Psalm 34:1-10, 21

We have just read the broken and sincere words of King David at a dark time in his life!

Anyone been broken by life? Had things not go according to plan?

Been discouraged, disappointed, betrayed, lonely, shamed or embarrassed?

This Psalm teaches us two main things:

- a) The importance of praise and
- b) How to face our fears.

Psalm 34 is an alphabetic acrostic. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is an individual hymn of thanksgiving of David sung on the occasion of the deliverance of his very life by God, perhaps as the ultimate word about God's help to those who are in need (a summary of all that could be said about God's help in the face of oppression and hurt). For us as readers these words of thanksgiving for deliverance, gives us hope for deliverance from various oppressive situations.

The backstory of Psalm 34 is 1 Samuel 21 & 22. Young David, the newly anointed king of Israel, was on the run. The old king, Saul, was jealous of the young king's popularity after his victory over Goliath. In his fear (and probably fatigue), David made a strategic and dumb mistake. He tried to get lost in the crowd in Philistine territory. Of all places, he went to Goliath's hometown, Gath! That would be like Benjamin Netanyahu seeking to hide out on the streets of Tehran! In no time, David was recognized. To protect himself, he feigned madness, scribbling on the walls and letting his saliva dribble down his face. He won the Best Actor award, he fooled the Philistines, who ejected him from their city. David fled to the cave of Adullam back in Israel's territory.

For some of us these last several months have been and are dark times when you have felt like hiding in a cave and not wanting to deal with all that is going on. The older I get, I watch loved one's age and struggle with health issues. Friends I have ministered to, and who have ministered to me called home, and of course the struggle with the devastating effects of Covid-19. Just this past week a family and our school community have been grappling with the issues related of suicide.

When anxiety issues push you past comfortable and take you to dangerous levels- where do you turn? Who or what do you lean on?

Society has a tendency to push us to temporary fixes. Take a pill for it, drink alcohol to numb it, or get rid of it and start new. I believe in new starts and I believe in a God of second and third chances, but repeated new starts are a red flag!

a) The importance of PRAISE

I think David can help us see some important lessons of our faith. First, we see the power of praise. V1-3 (The Living Bible)

"I will praise the Lord no matter what happens. I will constantly speak of his glories and grace. I will boast of all his kindness to me. Let all who are discouraged take heart. Let us praise the Lord together and exalt his name".

David wrote this Psalm at a low point in his life! He was alone. He had lost his best friend Jonathan and he was being chased by Saul and His assassins. Now he was in a cave, and begins praising the Lord.

I don't know about you but praise isn't always the first thing on my mind when I am in trouble. Sometimes you have to praise when it does not make any sense to praise. Sometimes when you don't feel like it is the time that the presence of God becomes so strong because in our brokenness, we see God's power!

I don't know what your dark spot is and where you are at with the Lord, but I know that praise may not immediately change your circumstance but it will immediately change your attitude.

When it is the darkest, you have to remember that it will not last forever! Joy will come in the morning- a little bit of light takes away the darkness. It cannot be dark if there is light. It may not be good for the moment but it cannot be dark if there is light.

The Bible says... *"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord"* (Psalm 150:6). Remember who you are in Christ and who is dwelling in you. Praise brings access to God. Therefore, *"Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise"* (Psalm 100:4). Take a step of faith and watch God's presence come!

Some of us need a get out of jail free card but we don't have one, and the only way to get one is to offer up praise that will bring down what is keeping you in.

- Praise is where God lives. Wait a minute, isn't God Omnipresent – everywhere, all the time? Absolutely! Yet His presence is especially intense in an atmosphere of praise. The Bible says God is *"Enthroned upon the praises of Israel"* God inhabits our praise (Psalm 22:3).
- Praise promotes Kingdom works. When we are praising God and lifting the name of Jesus, we are open to hear what God has to say to us as much or more than what we are going to say to God.
- Praise get us thinking right - Jack Taylor's commentary in his book, *The Hallelujah Factor*. *"When we praise, productivity is maximized, fulfillment is realized and frustration is neutralized"*
- Praise chases away despair. There's no better way to beat the blues than to change our focus from self to God. Such a shift produces *"the oil of gladness instead of mourning"* (Isaiah 61:3).

V6-7 (The Living Bible)

"This poor man cried to the Lord—and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles. For the Angel of the Lord guards and rescues all who reverence him".

Praise is the key to inner peace when the world is trying to shut us down and destroy us. The enemy will try to distract you and slow you down - but when we praise the Lord we push through those negative thoughts and allow the Holy Spirit to take us to worship and praise! Praise brings walls down! It beats frustration, failure, sickness, shame, negativity, and the enemy has to flee! Praise is a game changer!

b) How to face FEARS

The second important lesson of faith is; How to face fears. Psalm 34 is about the exuberance you feel when a great weight has been lifted! It's like the day all of the exams are over; or the day you pass the driving test.

John Calvin says of Psalm 34: *"David therefore, admonishes the faithful never to lose their courage, whatever evils may threaten them; since God, who can as easily deliver them a thousand times as once from death, will never disappoint their expectations"*

Our fear can keep us trapped in the darkness. We can't see what's in front of us or what's all around us ... and our imagination can often be our worst enemy. Maybe we can see the source of our fear quite clearly, but we're filled with fear or terror because we don't know what to do. But if we praise God ... if we pray ... He will open our hearts and our minds and we will know ... even if we can't see them ... that a host of heavenly angels are encamped around us, amen?

David stumbled into Philistia to hide. Jesus, on the other hand, came into our world ... not to flee or hide ... but to deliver us from an enemy that we cannot see ... an enemy that surrounds us and seeks to destroy us. When Jesus went out to confront Satan and his hoards, He faced a giant far greater than Goliath. In fact, He faced two great giants ... sin and death.

Jesus doesn't hide. He doesn't pretend to go nuts ... and yet, Jesus' detractors think that He must be insane to face Sin and Death alone ... no slingshot ... no sword ... no army.

His only weapon is the truth. And when Jesus died upon the cross, His enemies thought that they had won ... until it came time for them to see what they could not see ... an empty tomb!

When fear begins to close its icy grip upon your heart, what should you do? You should offer up praises to the LORD ... worship the LORD ... boast of the LORD ... magnify the LORD ... exalt the LORD ... call out to the LORD in prayer ... and then you should claim God's provision of deliverance through Jesus Christ, our Deliverer, who is encamped around those who fear Him and delivers them.

V8-10 "Oh, put God to the test and see how kind he is! See for yourself the way his mercies shower down on all who trust in him. If you belong to the Lord, reverence him; for everyone who does this has everything he needs. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those of us who reverence the Lord will never lack any good thing". (The Living Bible)

David is inviting us to experience what he has discovered: the goodness of God's salvation. David is celebrating that God has rescued him from his fears and troubles.

This psalm is an invitation to take God at his word, to trust in the Lord and experience his goodness firsthand, to know God personally, realizing that he loves us more than we can imagine. *"Taste and see that the Lord is good."* The invitation is ours to receive, but it is also ours to extend.

What opportunities has God given us to share his invitation with others? Whom would God ask us to include in his rescue and deliverance?

Prayer: "God ... we are totally freaked out right now. Our problems seem so huge ... insurmountable ... but we know that You are greater than anything we have to face, so keep reminding us of this truth as You continue to give us the strength to get through this situation, or at least get through this day, in Jesus' name. Amen."