

Psalm 55 for Website

Introduction

- Good morning. My name is Chris Martin, and I lead City Students, which is our 6th-12th grade ministry here at City Church.
- This morning we're going to be in Psalm 55.
- If you don't have a Bible you're welcome to grab one from the Bible nook in the back corner of the room and take it home with you. *BUT BEFORE...*
- Before we hop into the text, I want to explain WHY we're in Psalm 55—there are so many psalms (150 to be exact), why did I choose *this one*?
 - Because trust me, I didn't choose it because of its cheery, uplifting message.
 - It is a song, as it says in the subheading, but I don't imagine we'll be singing this one anytime soon, though Jacob can correct me if I'm wrong.
 - I love this psalm for a bunch of reasons.
 - **I love this psalm** because it reminds me that the psalms aren't all happy songs about how much God loves us.
 - **I love this psalm** because it reminds me that the Bible isn't an old, dusty book of rituals and rules—as we may be prone to believe.
 - **I love this psalm** because it reminds me that David, one of the most highly regarded men in the Bible, experienced the deepest depths of discouragement and emotional pain we normal people experience.
 - I think part of the reason we often struggle to read our Bibles on our own time is that we really wonder if the people who wrote this or the God who inspired it have any REAL idea or concern about what day-to-day difficulty we actually face.
 - We wonder if such an ancient book full of cryptic cultural references or bloody sacrificial rituals has anything to say about the most difficult, painful life experiences we endure.
 - My hope is that after this morning, if nothing else, you will come away believing more deeply that **THIS BOOK** and the God who inspired it are acquainted with your deepest pain and your most discouraging thoughts.
- So here we are in Psalm 55. You can follow along in your Bible as I read.
 - Or you can follow along on the screen behind me.
- [READ ALL OF PSALM 55]
- So what is going on here and what can we learn from David's lament about the betrayal of a friend?

1. When we are in our deepest, darkest place, we can cry out for God to listen. (v. 1-8)

- The most basic way to explain what led to Psalm 55 would be to say this: David, the author of the psalm, has been betrayed not by an enemy, but **BY A FRIEND**.
 - David doesn't name the friend in this psalm, but we have reason to believe

(because of events recorded in 2 Samuel) that the “betrayal” was his son Absalom and/or his trusted counselor Ahithophel.

- What did Absalom and Ahithophel do?
 - Absalom, king David’s son, planned a conspiracy to overthrow his dad as king.
 - Ahithophel, David’s trusted counselor, said, “Ok Absalom, let me help you. I’ll get 12,000 men together and we’ll pursue David and I will kill him myself.”
- So, it appears that David has been betrayed by a friend and is crying out to God to save him from this situation, in which he is the victim.
- But if you know much about the life of David, you know that he has been the betrayer in a similar situation.
 - In the not-too-distant past, David betrayed Uriah the Hittite, one of his best warriors.
 - David had an affair with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheeba, while Uriah was out fighting battles on behalf of David’s kingdom.
 - Then, to cover up the affair and make sure Uriah didn’t find out, he had Uriah sent to the most dangerous part of the battlefield so that he would be killed.
- David’s repentance for what he did to Uriah is recorded in Psalm 51, in which he says, "Turn your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt. God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps 51:9-10).
- Now, in Psalm 55, we see David crying out to God because he has been **betrayed** by a close friend.
 - He knows both sides of this equation.
 - David has been both **betrayed** AND **betrayed**.
- Here, in the first eight verses of Psalm 55, David cries out to God not in repentance, as the one who has betrayed a friend, but in desperation, as one who has been betrayed.
- He says: [READ PSALM 55:1-5]
- I know that the primary theme of this psalm is betrayal of a close friend or family member.
 - But this psalm really speaks to more broad issues than just the betrayal of a close friend.
 - I am thankful that I have never been betrayed by a close friend, but I know that I resonate with this psalm, which I think points to the fact that this psalm is really about pain and injustice, not just the betrayal of loved ones.
- Here in the first eight verses of the psalm, David is crying out to God because he is in one of the deepest, darkest places he has ever been.
- He’s saying, “God listen to me! I need your help!”
- Earlier this morning during our time of silence I asked you to think about the most difficult, painful experience of your life.
 - I hate to ask you to go there again, but imagine you are in that moment—perhaps you are experiencing that deep pain even this morning—and re-read some of David’s words.
 - “My heart shudders within me; terrors of death sweep over me.” (Ps 55:4)

- “I said, ‘If only I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and find rest.’” (Ps 55:6)
- "I would hurry to my shelter from the raging wind and the storm." (Ps 55:8)
- In the darkest, most painful periods of our lives, we often feel the exact same feelings David is expressing here.
 - We shake in fear.
 - We want to fly away.
 - Or maybe we want to curl up and never leave our houses again.
- **Two main takeaways I want us to see in these first eight verses:**
 - **First: David, one of the most highly regarded characters in Scripture, is well-acquainted with the deepest pain we experience.**
 - **God chose David to rule over his kingdom, and even David was not immune from the effects sin has wrought on the world.**
 - **Even David, as rich and mighty as he was, encountered situations that he could not solve by himself—he needed God to deliver him.**
 - **If the mighty king David found himself in vulnerable, painful situations, what makes us think we will avoid difficulty?**
 - **Second: When we are in our deepest, darkest pain, we have permission to cry out to God for help.**
 - **While we want to HIDE from the disaster and pain that surrounds us, God DOES NOT hide from our prayers.**
 - **God LISTENS and ANSWERS our prayers for deliverance amidst unthinkable pain.**
- I want to pause here to say a quick word about prayer.
 - Historically in my walk with Christ, I have gone through seasons in which I have struggled to pray consistently.
 - I’m sure **NONE** of you can relate to that.
 - Praying aloud sometimes feels like I’m just talking to myself or the ceiling.
 - Praying silently leads me to be distracted and start thinking about whatever I have going on after prayer.
 - Praying on paper, or writing my prayers down, has been most effective for me, but I still don’t do it as consistently as I would like.
 - When we pray to God, we are literally, in a spiritual sort of sense, entering the throne room of God.
 - Hebrews 4:16 says this, "Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need."
 - **If God is our Father, which he is, he has given us permission to come to his room at night and ask him for a glass of water when we’re thirsty.**
 - **We can come to him when we’ve had a terrible nightmare and we can’t go back to sleep.**
 - **God is not a mighty wizard in the sky judging whether or not our prayers included enough beautiful words for him to give us what we**

wish.

- **He does not chastise us for coming to him with any need, no matter how big or small it may be.**
- **God is our loving Father, and when we cry out to him in prayer we aren't talking to the ceiling.**
 - **We are entering his throne room and we have his attention.**
- **Whether we have been betrayed by a dear friend or we've lost a job we've worked for decades we can join with David in his desperate plea for God's ears to listen and his hands to deliver us.**
 - **Whether we need a glass of water or we need to be reminded why life is even worth living anymore, our Father's throne room is open to us.**
- Secondly, Psalm 55 shows us that...

2. When we experience injustice, we can ask God to act. (v. 9-15)

- Let's read verses 9-15 again: [READ]
- David doesn't pull any punches in this part of his prayer to God.
- It is common in the psalms for the writer to simply pray to be delivered out of a bad situation—which would inherently mean the defeat of his enemies—but the focus of the prayer is usually on the *deliverance* of the *oppressed* not the *destruction* of the *wicked*.
 - That is not the case here.
 - David prays for his own *deliverance*, but that's not all he prays for.
 - He also prays for his enemy's *destruction*.
- David prays explicitly in verse 9 that God would "confuse and confound" the speech of the ones plotting against him.
 - The literal translation of "confound" in verse 9 is "divide their tongue."
 - That sounds familiar...
 - It calls back to the scene at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, where nations had come together, all speaking the same language, in order to build a tower and show how powerful they were, in rebellion against God.
 - Amidst that rebellion, God confused and confounded their speech, giving the people groups different languages and causing them to not be able to understand each other.
 - Here, David is asking God to do the same thing: "God, please thwart the rebellion of my son and my advisor by messing up their communication."
 - Not to get too far away from Psalm 55, but God answers David's prayer. He confuses and confounds the communication of Absalom and Ahithophel by sending Hushai, a friend of David's, to infiltrate the rebellion as a sort of "secret agent" and ultimately overthrow it.
- Psalm 55 shows us that, yes, while it is important to pray for the salvation of evil people and our enemies, we can pray other prayers as well.
- God is a just God, which means he wants righteousness and goodness to prevail over

evil and darkness.

- This means we can pray prayers like David did here in Psalm 55.
 - David doesn't pray just to be delivered.
 - He doesn't pray that his rebellious friends repent.
 - David prays that "death would take them by surprise" because "evil is in their homes and within them" (v. 15).
- **When you're experiencing the deepest, darkest pain you've ever felt, especially if it is at the hands of an attacker or an oppressor of some kind, pray for God to carry out his justice on them.**
 - **Whether your oppressor is another person or it's the chief oppressor, Satan himself, we need to know we can pray this way.**
- **Having compassion on our enemies and those who hurt us is noble, to be sure, but there comes a time where it is *no longer compassionate* to sit idly by while EVIL people carry out EVIL deeds that have REAL consequences on people we love.**
 - **NOW, I have to remind you here: we do not have permission to just pray destruction on people we don't like.**
 - **It isn't appropriate to ask God to let death take the person who cut us off in traffic by surprise.**
 - **It isn't right to ask God to drag politicians we don't like into Sheol alive.**
- Amidst calling for God to act in his perfect justice, we must remember two things:
 - **First: we must remember that God carries out HIS justice in HIS time—so just because God doesn't strike our attacker dead where he stands doesn't mean God isn't listening or God isn't just.**
 - **Second: we must remember that when we ask God to judge our enemies justly that we will be judged by the same measurements.**
 - In humility we must recognize that our sin demands God's justice as well.
 - So even while we can pray for God to carry out his judgment on our enemies, we should repent and ask him to forgive our on sin, which itself deserves to be judged.
 - **When we are hurt by the sins of others, it's easy to forget we sin plenty ourselves.**
 - **So in our prayers for God to carry out justice on those who hurt us, we should humbly remember that God has carried out justice on us in his Son, Jesus Christ.**
 - **In fact, we see David do a version of that here, in the final part of his prayer in Psalm 55.**

3. When we feel the effects of sin, we must remember our salvation. (v. 16-23)

- Psalm 55:16-23 says this: [READ]
- I absolutely love how David makes a sort of 90-degree turn in the psalm at this point.

- In verse 15, David is literally wishing death on his betrayers, he says, "Let death take them by surprise; let them go down to Sheol alive, because evil is in their homes and within them. -- Psalms 55:15 (CSB)
 - Then in verse 16, he seems to make an about face, and he says, "BUT I call to God..."
 - It reminds me so much of my favorite passage in Scripture, Ephesians 2:1-10, in the middle of which, after describing our sinfulness and utter dirtiness, Paul says in verses 4-5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses."
 - In both of these instances, Psalm 55 and Ephesians 2, we see God stepping into the brokenness of our world not to smite sinners or rebuke our rebellious hearts—NO!—INSTEAD, we see God stepping into our brokenness to restore us to himself.
- When we feel distant from God, whether we feel this distance because of something WE HAVE DONE or because of something someone has done to us, WE MUST BE REMINDED that God has not LEFT US out of frustration or impatience.
 - God does not step into our brokenness to yell at us for making a mess of our lives.
 - God is not an impatient father too busy with his work to care about what's making you so sad.
 - No. He doesn't do that to us. God loves us and he wants us to feel his love for us.
 - God doesn't pity us in our filthiness. He loves us because we have been made clean by the blood of Christ.
 - God steps into our brokenness to lead us to a restorative relationship with himself.
 - God comes into our pain and says, "I hear you. Come to me and I will give you rest."
- **When we feel the effects of sin, whether of our own sin or of how others have sinned against us, we must remember that our salvation, our HOPE, is rooted in the UNTOUCHABLE, FINISHED work of Jesus Christ.**
- What is your hope?
 - What is your purpose?
 - How can you tell?
 - Ask yourself these questions:
 - **What do I think about when i wake up in the morning?**
 - **What determines whether or not I have had a "good day"?**
 - **What makes me the most angry?**
- Let's sit on that for a minute. This is one of my favorite topics to talk about with our students because the high schoolers especially are at such a formative, fork-in-the-road sort of time in their lives.
 - Understanding what DRIVES us is CRITICAL!
- **Here's an illustration:**

- Imagine a distant relative passes away and you somehow inherit \$100,000 cash.
- When you receive the money, you can either put it in your bedroom closet or you can deposit it into your bank.
- The right answer is to deposit the money into the bank, right? It's a no-brainer.
- Having \$100,000 tucked behind your clothes in your bedroom closet is foolish. Why?
 - Someone could break into your house and steal the money.
 - Your house could burn down and the money would burn up with everything else.
 - You could misplace the money or otherwise lose access to it some way.
- But, if you deposit the cash into the bank, it's safe. It's secure.
 - We bank with Chase. If a Chase bank gets robbed or burns down, I don't lose my money.
- \$100,000 is a lot of money and storing it in a vulnerable location is foolish when a secure location is readily available to us.
- Putting our HOPE, our PURPOSE, in our jobs, our stuff, our friends, and yes, even our family members, is like putting \$100,000 cash in our bedroom closet. How? We can easily lose all of those things!
 - We can lose our jobs.
 - Our stuff can burn up in minutes.
 - Our friends can betray our trust.
 - Our family members can abandon us.
 - When we expect our stuff or our loved ones to be our security and our hope, they will break and we will blame them for not bearing a burden they were never meant to bear!
- Putting our hope in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is wisely storing our inheritance in our bank accounts.
 - Here's how:
 - The saving work of Christ is in the past.
 - Like, on a timeline, the work that Christ did to save us into an eternal relationship with himself **ALREADY HAPPENED.**
 - **IT IS UNTOUCHABLE.**
 - Nothing that happens in the future can undo what has already happened.
 - Do you understand what that means? Do you understand how **FREEING** that is to us?
 - That means that nothing we do today can **UNDO** what has already **BEEN DONE.**
 - That means nothing you do next week or next year can make what **IS TRUE** become **UNTRUE!**
 - No matter how many jobs you lose, you cannot lose the resurrection

of Jesus.

- **No matter how much debt you take on, Jesus has already taken on the debt of your sin.**
- **No matter how much you "mess up" YOUR children, God will never abandon YOU as HIS child.**
- **Nothing we DO can UN-DO the finished work of Jesus Christ.**
- **HOW FREEING IS THAT? AMEN!?**
- When we feel the effects of sin, whether it be our own sin or others' sin, we must remember our salvation, our hope, is in Jesus and his finished work. Nothing we do today or will do in the future can take that away.

Conclusion/Moving Forward

- Back in Psalm 55, David concludes the psalm with a beautiful, terrifying contrast of two truths.
- He says in verses 22-23: [READ v. 22-23]
- This is pretty black and white. It's pretty clear:
 - Will you be the "righteous" who are sustained by God, unshaken by the deepest pain, finding your hope in the finished work of Christ? (v. 22)
 - Or will you be the among those brought down by God into the pit of destruction, clawing for security and hope in what you can do now and in the future? (v. 23)
- The righteous, who are sustained by God, are not called "righteous" because they are perfect or because they clean themselves up before God.
 - The righteous, who are sustained by God, are humble sinners who cling to God because THEY know that HE is their only hope.
 - They cast their burden on the LORD, not on the temporary things of this world.
- The treacherous people who find themselves in the pit of destruction find themselves there because they were prideful enough to put their hope in the things of this world, themselves, or even their loved ones who inevitably disappoint them.
- Who are you?
 - Have you put your hope in Christ or have you put your hope in something or someone who can disappoint you?
- When we find ourselves in our deepest, darkest pain, as David has here in Psalm 55, we must put our hope in the untouchable, finished work of God in Christ.
- The last line of Psalm 55 is David saying, "But I will trust in you."
- **This morning, if you have trusted the Lord and you know he is your only hope, praise God!**
 - **Be sure to be in community here at City Church with people who can encourage you along the narrow, difficult path of following Jesus.**
- **But if you haven't trusted the Lord before and you're here this morning, you need to realize your \$100,000 inheritance is tucked away in your bedroom closet and**

you're just hoping nothing happens to it.

- **If you have never trusted Christ as your hope, I beg you to do that today.**
- **You have no idea how freeing it is to live life with the knowledge that your hope completely un-reliant on how well you perform.**
- **How do you know if you trust Christ? When you are in your deepest discouragement, do you run to Christ or do you run to something else?**
 - **Do you run to alcohol?**
 - **Do you run to workaholism?**
 - **Do you run to someone who tells you how awesome you are?**
- **If you want to see what it looks like to actually put your hope in Jesus, please either write on the info card in your seat that you'd like to talk with someone about following Jesus, or come up to me after service and I'd love to talk through that with you.**
- **When it feels like our world is crumbling around us, our only hope is to trust in the One who has created and overcome the world.**
 - **Without him, we have no hope.**