

A Plea for God's Help

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 June 2019

Preacher: Jason Tippetts

[0 : 00] Good morning. As Chris alluded to in his prayer, Jim Franks and I have been at our national gathering for our church this past week and just got back last night, and so it's our joy to welcome Jason Tippetts to come and bring God's Word to us this morning. So Jason, I invite you to come up and join me here. Jason has been a pastor here in Colorado Springs in our city for many years at one of our sister churches, Westside Presbyterian Church, and has just recently begun a transition away from Westside to begin a new church plant in Buena Vista, Colorado. And so we're excited for Jason as he begins to continue the work that we love, which is to expand the gospel here in Colorado. And so thank you, Jason, and welcome. Thank you.

It's okay if I move this? If you said no, I didn't hear you. Well, thank you for allowing me the privilege to—is this on? It is okay. It's a new place. I can't ever tell, and everything's distracting to me, okay? So you might have to be a little gracious. It's really—it's great to be here this morning. I know a lot of guest pastors say that. I mean it. I'm not sure if they do, but I have been—we—your church has allowed us as Westside to use your building for several things, so I've been here doing a funeral for ordination service, been here for Presbytery. I was with you for your Good Friday service. This is the first time I've been here on a Sunday morning, so it is really great to be here, and it's wonderful to join in other communities and worship and just see the differences and take joy in the differences. This morning, we're going to look at Psalm 4. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to turn there. God, in His good mercy and kindness, put Psalm 4 in the easy place to find, right before Psalm 3 and Psalm 5. So if you can find those two, it just like turn a little page. There's a couple pages. It's right there. Sorry. This morning in this Psalm, this Psalm has to do with suffering, and as you and I have lived in this world, we know that suffering is everywhere.

Specifically in this Psalm, it's the suffering of really of David being slandered by the people around him. There's no historical story that we know. This is exactly when this happened. Like in Psalm 3, when Psalm 3 is about when David was fleeing from Absalom. This one here is just general. David feels discouraged and despair because he has been slandered. And there's something about a love-hate relationship we have with slander. At some level, we hate it because we hate to be slandered, but then if we're really honest, we understand at some other level, we enjoy slandering other people because it brings us some comfort, sadly. And so sometimes we do that for comfort. But let's look at this Psalm together.

Psalm 4, let me read this. Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah. But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

[3 : 43] The Lord hears when I call to him. Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts, on your beds, and be silent. Selah.

Offer right sacrifices. Put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I both lie down and sleep.

For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. In this Psalm, there's really a simple structure of David pleading for God's help.

David addresses his enemies who are slandering him and being very hurtful to him. And then there's the expression of David's security in God.

We'll begin with the beginning. David pleading for God's help. Have you, what was the place like in your life where you pleaded for God's help?

[4 : 59] When you knew there was really nothing you could do besides trust in God's goodness and his character and his promises. As David begins in the Psalm, we see this progression of him pleading.

And at the end, he finds comfort. David boldly goes before God and pleads for God to answer for two reasons. Because God is the God of his righteousness.

It says, God of my righteousness. And he gives relief and grace. Our struggle many times comes when we have this great, wonderful painting of the relief we want God to give us.

And the grace we want God to give us to relieve us of whatever burden or struggle we are in. And we're probably very polite and we tell God, if you do this, if you give me this temporary thing, everything's going to be better. I'll find some comfort.

So God, if you would just fix this, it would be okay. But that's not at all what David is doing in the Psalm. Because we see where he lands is not a place of him saying, God, thank you for killing everyone who hates me.

[6 : 20] Now life will be pleasant. But he lands at a place of finding joy and peace in God above all things. And David is very bold as he calls upon God.

God of my righteousness. We all have different terms we're called. If you have children and you're a parent, you're called father or mother.

If you are an aunt, you're called an aunt. If you have these other names that you know, when you hear that name, you listen in a certain way. When that human is pleading with you.

We have several kids in our neighborhood. And the first day we met one of these little kids, I told him my name was Superman. So for the last year, he calls me Superman.

And so one, it just helps me feel like I'm a, like every day I just feel a little bit better. But it's, I know when he's calling out Superman, I know who he means.

[7 : 23] So David here is calling on, he says, the God of my righteousness. David is claiming what God has promised.

God has promised righteousness. Which really, we see the whole Bible, we see it's Christ. That's the real promise. David is not saying, God, I'm calling on you because I am righteous.

He is claiming God's righteousness because God has graciously extended his righteousness and put David in a place of the family of God where David can receive comfort and peace and joy and rest in a way that does not mean that his temporary circumstances are changed.

But in the midst of his circumstances of being slandered and hated by people, there is still peace and rest.

David is not claiming that he has done good and he's not claiming to try to leverage his goodness toward God to make God do something.

[8 : 45] Because as much as we really want to believe the gospel, like the free grace of God, that you are embraced more by God than you can ever, ever understand, and you cannot be any more loved by God.

As much as we want to believe that, there's a part of us that is always thinking, well, if I'm more obedient, God will bless me more.

And sometimes it's hidden deep. Sometimes we're just really clear about it. And we just get angry. Because we're slandered or we suffer. And our thought is, God, how could you do this to me?

God calls us to plead to him. And part of pleading is being honest. And it's being honest with that economy that you secretly have in your heart toward God.

Thinking, if I just do all these things right, I can really experience heaven on earth and I'll get all the blessings I would ever want here. But that's not God's promise.

[10 : 00] God's promise is, when you are slandered, when you are hurt, when you grieve, when you are broken, God meets you.

So the psalm begins with David pleading, and then God addresses his enemies. David appeals to his enemies, really for their good sense.

He's almost saying, will you please stop? Do you not know what you're doing? It's hurtful. It's destructive. And in a way, he's pleading for them to stop.

He's pleading for their general good understanding of humanity. Basically, let's just be fair to each other.

Can you stop? He's asking them to be mature. But David is confident that God will answer him when he calls, because the Lord has set apart the godly for himself.

[11 : 15] The Lord has set apart the godly for himself. Which means, if you trust in Christ, God has you.

It does not mean you will not suffer. It means in the midst of your suffering, you can be convinced that God holds you, and he will never let you go.

Even when you are being slandered. But in the same way, you are gods, because of the work of Christ, even when you slander others.

Because sadly, we still have this sinful, selfish part of us. Even us who are resting in Christ, and we are hurt, and our first thought is, I'm going to hurt back, and then it's fair.

Because that's the old economy we really like. And that's how we treat God in the gospel. But that's not how God treats us. We've all been there.

[12 : 30] Someone slanders you, and you slander them back. I'm sure you do it more politely, more tactfully maybe, more maturely, or what we do, is we have these fantasy arguments in our head.

Where we, someone has slandered and hurt us, and we have this fantasy argument in our head with them. You know what's amazing in these? You always win.

Don't you? Like never at any point have you had those fantasy arguments, and you're like, oh, they got me. It's more hurt. But in the fantasy argument, it is us extending hurt.

You hurt me, I'll hurt you. What David is doing here as he is slanders, he is pleading to God that God would deal with his enemies.

But what God does is God deals with David. God matures David through this process. We don't have access to what God did with those enemies, how God answered this plea.

[13 : 45] We don't have an answer to that. But we do know that God dealt with David. I remember over 20 years ago, I worked at a camp here in the mountains during the summers in college, and one of the things they said over and over and over was talk to and not about.

Talk to and not about. That's one way that helps when there is conflict, when there is slander, is talk to and not about.

It doesn't mean when you talk to the person, your fantasy argument is going to actually happen and that person is going to be shut down. What happens in that, if you do talk to and not about and you deal with it in a biblical way, is you're giving God, allowing God this great opportunity because you are following the pattern of how to deal with conflict and hurt.

After David has introduced God as righteous and gracious, he is showing that people fall into really only two categories. There's either, you are either receiver of God's grace or you are a seeker of this world.

It's just a summary of the two categories of where people fall in this world. And David goes on in verse four and he says, be angry and do not sin.

[15 : 20] Ponder in your hearts and on your beds and be silent. Another way to translate this, which I think fits better and I'm not the only person to think that.

Other commentators think that and I might even have a footnote in your Bible that the word, where it says be angry, it's also translated tremble. And it uses this in Psalm 18 verse seven.

So if you read it that way, tremble and do not sin. Ponder in your hearts and on your beds and be silent. What is David calling his enemies here to do?

To tremble, to ponder in their heart while they're in their bed and to be silent.

I think that's really good advice for all of us to have time where we separate and we ponder. We live in such a distracted world that we don't think this is worthwhile time anymore.

[16 : 25] If someone is to say, all right, next week you need to have three hours where you just rest. You're not on your phone, you're not reading a book, you go for a walk and you're just really wasting time.

That's what we call it as Americans. You're just wasting time, you're not being productive. For many of us, it's just frustrating and it's hard.

There's a book I'm reading and I say that very liberally. I think I've had this book for six weeks and I'm in chapter three, but it's really good, okay? But I did open it recently.

It is called Disruptive Witness and it talks about as Christians, as the people and family of God, what we want and we see it in the Great Commission is we want people to know Christ.

We want people who don't know Jesus to be introduced to Jesus and to grow in what it means to walk with Jesus. That's one of the things we really want. But what happens is when we're communicating the gospel, we're communicating it in a way that we assume that everyone thinks deep and thick about this world.

[17 : 47] That we all spend time pondering the question, why are we here? But what happens is many people in this world, they don't ask that question.

I was talking to a friend recently and he works in real estate and he was asking someone in his office, he asked them, what do you think it means to live in the fullness of your humanity?

And the person's office was like, what? It doesn't make any sense. But as Christians, we are called to live thick lives.

Our struggle is we many times choose really thin lives. and the thinness of our life is you hurt me, I'll hurt you.

You slander me, I will slander you. It's the thinness of life. But we're called to live thick lives built on a completely different foundation.

[18 : 52] So we are to ponder, to stop, and to wrestle with the claims of God.

But we are too distracted to make the time to do that. You're in your car, what do you do?

Turn the radio on. Everywhere we go, there's music. I'm not a big music fan. So I like to turn music off and just have it be quiet. But I have four kids, another on the way.

Sometimes I do want to turn it up because it's just quieter. We're all listening to the same thing. But we don't spend a lot of time pondering. And maybe that is a step you could take to live a thick life in the midst of your suffering.

that you take time to ponder. That you take time to think. That you take time with God's word.

[20 : 02] And not stick to your read the Bible in a year plan where you're plowing through stuff so at the end of the year you can check the box. But take time and take something small from scripture and ponder and meditate on the good things of God.

Sit in the beauty of his creation. Aim to live a thick, deep life. Because when we aim for that, for the richness of life, when there is suffering, when there is slander, when there is hurt, we are equipped to deal with that much better than if we just live a thin life.

And try to do everything we can. There is this fascination in our culture with the next thing. And I think that is why we don't, that is why I don't sit and ponder more.

Because I am too focused on what is the next thing. And what do I need to do to accomplish that next thing? Instead of sitting and resting to have time to ponder.

So verse 4, be angry and do not sin. Again, tremble and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent.

[21 : 35] And this does not mean that you lay in your bed and tweak your fantasy argument to really attack the other person. It is that you sit and you remember God's goodness to you.

And who you are as a child of God. And the blessings that you have that can never be taken away no matter what anyone says about you.

even in the midst of real suffering, of slander, of hurt, but in your grief, remembering God's promise that he will never leave you nor forsake you.

That is what adds to the richness of our life. life. But our tendency is to live this thin, reactionary life.

And as you, as we grow as people, we begin to realize that our retaliation, our reaction in slander or anger never ever accomplishes the peace that we want.

[22 : 52] Never. But there's something about anger as a feeling that I think it's one of the most desired, like reactionary feelings.

Because there's something about anger that we feel in control. So when someone hurts you or slanders you, when you are walking through suffering, understand you have a choice.

You can go down the path of anger, which feels much better than the other one. Because you feel in control, you feel powerful, you feel like you are the only person that's just.

The other avenue is to feel brokenness. Which part of brokenness feels out of control. In some way it feels more hurtful.

In some ways it feels like this open pit that you could step into and you feel like you could never ever come out. But if we choose the path of brokenness, then we see in scripture who is God near to?

[24 : 05] The broken hearted. It doesn't say in the Bible God is near to those who are angry and retaliate well. It is God is near to the broken hearted.

So when you are slandered, feel the brokenness of that. Feel the brokenness with the thickness of life that God will never leave you nor forsake you.

Because you can be broken not only of the sin of being slandered, you can feel the brokenness of the one who slandered you and the state that their life is in.

And then David commands his enemies, offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord. He is calling his enemies to come and know the goodness of God.

Offer right sacrifices. A part of that is confession and repentance. repentance. Returning to a right relationship with God where God would become their righteousness.

[25 : 21] Because it is only by faith that we receive his righteousness. It's not being more righteous. And even the worst enemy of God can receive his righteousness.

So that opportunity, that situation like this one when David is being slandered against, just like this situation that you may be in now or maybe a close memory in your mind where you are slandered, it is an opportunity for someone to understand the mercy and grace of God.

But if you choose anger and retaliation, you are doing opposite of what that opportunity could open. David's view of his enemies changes in the psalm.

He wants them to know the path of life. And I think that's where we can see God working in our heart in those situations.

situations. And I think we've all been there where, again, you have been hurt and you just want to retaliate and squish that person. But your heart grows more in the direction of brokenness.

[26 : 46] grace. And you begin to have compassion on that person. We see there, that's a great growth and maturity in life and understanding relationships.

God, David wants them to receive God's grace. grace. There's a way of receiving relief when we are in distress.

There's a way to grow in confidence in our creator and redeemer when we are in hurt. It is the way of grace.

We all want to be heard. We all want to have peace. We all want to have rest. But this psalm shows us it is not, those are not circumstantial things.

To have peace and rest and joy are not based on what is presently going on in your life. If they are, you are choosing the thin life.

[28 : 04] The thick life. is understanding that only that joy and peace and comfort comes in understanding God's promises.

So what does God provide in the midst of suffering that nothing else provides? what is there in how God relates to humanity that is drastically different than anything else this world provides that they would call peace?

Things this world provides that are called peace may be a gated community, may be a better security system, may be kids that are well-educated and productive members of society.

We could say that would bring a level of peace but that's not at all the peace that David is talking about. David ends this, so you have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

In peace I both lie down and sleep for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. I think the general nature of the psalm helps us to implant this in our own life.

[29 : 39] When we read Psalm 3, David fleeing from Absalom, there's something of history where we think like, I don't really know what to do with this. Someone's chasing me, someone's really not chasing me right now.

Well, here, there's this general, you are slandered, you are in despair, you are hurt, you do not know what to do. Where is your comfort? Your comfort is in Christ alone.

But it's taking those steps to live a thick life. In this Psalm, there's no answer given to the oppression that David is going through.

There's no answer given for the suffering of David, a child of God. There's no answer given how long will David suffer under this.

No answer given. There's no timeline, there's no reason, and that's frustrating. Because when we suffer, if we at least know why, then we feel better.

[30 : 53] Don't we? There's a part of us that thinks, if I know why I'm suffering, I can take it. But God, in his providence, many times, I think majority of the time, does not give us reasons for our suffering.

suffering. But as we understand psalms like this, we see it helps us to live a thick life, being more dependent on Christ for peace than we are about the security system in our home, or how much money you have in the bank.

nothing will give you the peace that you truly long for.

Nothing in this world will give you that. It is in Christ alone. And if you're here today and you trust in Christ, you probably like me when I listen to sermons, I nod like, yeah, I believe that.

Yeah, that's probably true. And then I walk out the door, and I live my life, and I get frazzled by crazy things, and I begin to live with a whole different economy than the gospel.

[32 : 22] There is no greater peace than knowing Christ. And this is something we have to remind ourselves of every single day.

And that's one reason why we're all here this morning, is we understand, we need to be together as God's people. And we need to be reminded of what is true, because we slowly start to build our own economy of how do I earn peace, how do I earn joy, how do I earn significance, how do I stay away from slander, how do I hurt people who hurt me the best way I can.

you have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.

It truly makes no sense that David is being slandered and hurt. hurt. And he says, God, I have more joy in my heart than if I was the wealthiest man in this nation.

That is how, that is what it means to walk closely with Jesus. when you can say, that is all I have.

[33 : 46] That is the only joy, the deep, thick joy that I have. Now, there is joy in a nice, hot cup of coffee in the morning, a beautiful sunset, a hug from your family.

Those are truly joyful things. But it is not the joy that David is trying to root himself in. In peace I both lie down and sleep.

For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Sleeping is one of the most vulnerable things we do as people.

Isn't it shocking that we live through our day, like we do whatever, all the activity, we eat, and then it comes nighttime, like bedtime, like seven.

And I may be getting old. 7 p.m., and what do we do? We close our eyes, and we sleep. The most vulnerable thing.

[34 : 56] It's also fascinating, animals do the same thing. They don't go to bed at 7, but we sleep. Who cares for us in our sleep? God does.

Every single night, you go to sleep, and you wake up the next day. And I know you have because you're here. You went through that vulnerable time.

You probably weren't even stressed about it. And here you are. And that's a small picture of God's goodness. God takes care of his people.

And the great thing is, the greater thing than that is, if we were to go to sleep and not wake up the next day, we are in the presence of God, in the fullness of joy.

And we have missed out on nothing. God is the only being who truly provides the joy that you long for.

[36 : 07] I encourage you to live a life of thickness. Ponder and meditate and rest in God's goodness. Because when turmoil and suffering come, and they will to all of us, you will have a thickness in your life.

And you'll remember that it is God who really, truly cares for you. Won't you pray with me? Most gracious God, we thank you that we are here this morning.

We thank you that your promises are true. And God, we also admit that we come to you in such weak faith.

We come to you and want to distort the grace you extend to us. And we pray that we would not only know your forgiveness, we would experience it, and you would increase our faith.

That we would see the beauty of knowing you are the one who gives us true joy, even when we are on the sharp end of slander.

[37 : 25] You are good, you are faithful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.