

# Refuge

*I will say to the LORD,  
“My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”  
(Psalm 91:2 ESV)*

*My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?  
(Psalm 42:2 ESV)*

*And those who know your name put their trust in you,  
for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.  
(Psalm 9:10 ESV)*

## **Joy Comes With The Morning**

**June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Psalm 30**

**Rev. Paul Carter**

### **Introduction:**

Well good morning church! It is so good to see you and it SO GOOD to be together in this place – can you say amen to that? Amen.

Well if you have your Bible with you – and I hope you do - I'd love for you to open it now to Psalm 30. You may not even remember this, but we have been using the Psalms to help us navigate the many twists and turns of COVID19. Way back on March 29<sup>th</sup> of 2020 – once we realized that COVID was not going to be a short-term thing, we began this series with a sermon on Psalm 91. That sermon was called “My God In Whom I Trust”. God was taking us down a road we hadn't travelled on for about 100 years and we needed some assurance that he knew the way and that he would watch over us.

Then a few weeks later, after Easter we jumped back into series with a message from Psalm 95 called “The Day of Testing”. Psalm 95, you may recall, looks back on the story recorded in Exodus 17 – the story of the people of God being driven BY GOD to the brink of exhaustion and despair. He walked them out into the desert and nearly into their graves before FINALLY at JUST

THE RIGHT TIME bringing water from the rock just short of Mount Sinai. J. Alec Motyer had a great quote here that I found very helpful. He said:

“There is no such thing as an untried faith.”<sup>1</sup>

In every journey of faith there will be a day of testing. You can count on that. There is no such thing as an untried faith – we needed to be reminded of that.

Then, later in April we looked at Psalm 77. That message was called “How To Think Your Way Out Of Doubt And Depression”. We needed that Psalm because by that point in the pandemic, cut off from all our normal sources of joy and comfort and from all our normal inputs and encouragements – we had started to wilt on the vine, hadn’t we? So we needed to share the journey of our brother Asaph INTO and OUT OF spiritual depression.

Then we took a long break and talked about some other things because we realized that this pandemic was going to go on FOR A VERY LONG TIME. But then we came back to this series on June 14<sup>th</sup> of 2020 – when the first lockdown was ended and we were permitted back into the building for large group worship gatherings - at 30% capacity, do you remember that? That was a good day. And so we went to Psalm 87 and we read a pilgrim Psalm written by the Sons of Korah for folks travelling up to the house of the Lord for a time of corporate worship. In that Psalm we heard:

Singers and dancers alike say, “All my springs are in you.” (Psalm 87:7 ESV)

Are you feeling that today? All my springs are in you - we were feeling that on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2020 I can tell you. It was GOOD to be in the house of the Lord on that day. It felt like a foretaste of heaven. It felt like an oasis in the desert. And it turned out to be exactly that.

We went back into hard lockdown in December of 2020, we came out of it briefly and then went back into it again in early April of 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Alec Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, ed. J. A. Motyer, The Bible Speaks Today. Accordance electronic ed. (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 176.

This has been the longest, hardest, deepest valley we've been through, as a church, in living memory. We have gone months without the Lord's Supper, we have gone months without hugs and handshakes and baby showers and lemonade on the lawn, we have gone months without sitting TOGETHER, IN PERSON under the Word of the Lord, we've gone months without full throated, uninhibited, corporate PRAISE – this has been a long, hard, dark valley – but in this passage, David assures us that joy comes with the morning!

Can you say amen to that?

Thanks be to God – that's the Psalm we're looking at today. This isn't the END of our journey - but it is the breaking of DAWN after a long and difficult night.

So – I hope you have your Bible open BY NOW, to Psalm 30.

W.S. Plumer argues persuasively for a setting INSIDE the events narrated in 1 Chronicles 21-22. If you remember that story – DAVID was in the prime of his power, all his enemies had been defeated and he was becoming impressed with his own prosperity and stability and in his complacency, he foolishly commissioned a review of his military power. In 1 Chronicles 21 the story begins this way:

Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. <sup>2</sup> So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, “Go, number Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, and bring me a report, that I may know their number.” <sup>3</sup> But Joab said, “May the LORD add to his people a hundred times as many as they are! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?” <sup>4</sup> But the king's word prevailed against Joab. (1 Chronicles 21:1–4 ESV)

So the census was conducted, the number was reported – but the thing itself did not sit well with the Lord – and verse 7 says he STRUCK ISRAEL. David pleaded with the Lord, he confessed his guilt – but God had seen David's pride and complacency and he ordained a season of affliction and difficulty in order to deal with it. He offered David a choice of trials:

3 years of famine, 3 months of military losses or 3 days of pestilence.

David **CHOSE** the plague.

And 70,000 men of Israel died.

But if you recall – the plague didn't actually last the full 3 days – in fact it seems like it lasted less than half of that. Before David expected it to – before it was supposed to – all of the sudden, seemingly out of nowhere – it came to a sudden and glorious end.

God dealt with them more kindly than they deserved - and this is the song that David wrote in response.

It has 3 parts to it. It is structured as a sort of praise sandwich. There is a song of praise at the start, and a song of praise at the end and in the middle David reflects upon the time he spent in the School of Affliction.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 1:

### **Song 1:**

**<sup>1</sup>I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.**

**<sup>2</sup> O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.**

**<sup>3</sup> O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.**

**<sup>4</sup>Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.**

**<sup>5</sup> For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.**

In this first song David talks about being **DRAWN UP** out of a pit - the Hebrew word he uses there in verse 1 is actually the word you would use to describe drawing a bucket up out of a well.

That was David's experience.

He was thrown into the well - he was in Sheol as it were - he had one foot in the grave; some commentators suggest here that David himself was probably sick with whatever plague it was that had befallen the nation. David thought he would die but he CRIED OUT TO GOD and the Lord healed him. He restored his life - and he restored the life of the nation.

“Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment and his favour is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night - but joy comes with the morning.”

David’s song also reflects his comfort in the hand of the Lord – even when that hand is delivering a punishment. You remember that David was offered a choice of punishments; 1 Chronicles 21:11-12 records God saying:

‘Choose what you will:<sup>12</sup> either three years of famine, or three months of devastation by your foes while the sword of your enemies overtakes you, or else three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.’ (1 Chronicles 21:11–12 ESV)

David, very wisely, chose to fall into the hand of the Lord directly. He chose the plague. A plague that was supposed to last 3 days. And it was a brutal plague - after a single day 70,000 men of Israel had fallen. David and the Elders were repenting before God in sackcloth - and, all of the sudden, the Lord graciously relented. Verse 15 of 1 Chronicles 21 says:

And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (1 Chronicles 21:15 ESV)

By the way - that’s why they put the temple there! As you will no doubt recall, David bought the field and verses 26-27 go on to say that:

David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings and called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering.<sup>27</sup> Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. (1 Chronicles 21:26–27 ESV)

That's the story, then behind those beautiful words in verse 5 at the end of the first song in Psalm 30:

**his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.**

David's WORSHIP flows out of his newfound experiential knowledge that God DEALS with his children more GENTLY than they deserve!

So that's why they put the temple there! Because THIS REVELATION is the well spring of all mature and understanding worship!

Look at the ascription for Psalm 30. It says:

A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple. (Psalm 30:0 ESV)

David WROTE this for the dedication of the temple – a dedication he would not be alive to attend. Solomon was king by the time the temple was dedicated – but David wrote this Psalm in anticipation of that day. David wanted the temple to be built HERE because this was the place where he as King and the nation as a whole had EXPERIENCED God's kindness, gentleness and mercy.

All true worship flows out of the recognition that God is treating us far better than we deserve. All true worship flows out of an improved recognition of the character and nature of the Lord.

J. Alec Motyer has a great line here in terms of what David learned about God as a result of this experience, he says:

“His holiness includes a capacity to move at speed from anger to favour.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alec Motyer, *Psalms By The Day*, (Geanies House: Christian Focus, 2016), 75.

Isn't that good? That's an important thing to KNOW and it was LEARNING that and ASSIMILATING that great truth that transformed David from a BOASTER into a WORSHIPPER.

David tells us a little bit about that process now, beginning in verse 6:

### **The School Of Affliction:**

**‘As for me, I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.”**

By the way – let's just pause and see that THIS is how you get yourself ENROLLED in the School of Affliction. This is how Nebuchadnezzar got himself enrolled in the School of Affliction – this is how David got himself enrolled in the School of Affliction and I would argue, this is how WE got ourselves enrolled in the School of Affliction.

I said in my prosperity – brothers and sisters – all manner of STUPID and BLASPHEMOUS things tend to be said by God's people IN THEIR PROSPERITY!! We say so much of this stuff that we've had to develop a name for it; we call it “Prosperity Gospel” now. We think we've earned our health, peace and prosperity - more than that we think we are owed our health, peace and prosperity – and that's the sort of STUPID and BLASPHEMOUS nonsense that SUMMONS precisely this sort of remedial calamity.

Whenever you think you are entitled to something – because you are good or because you have done this or that – you have lost the Gospel; you have forgotten who you are and you have forgotten who God is – and you are SCREAMING out your need for a year or two in the School of Affliction.

The Gospel is about MERCY. It's about people NOT RECEIVING what they deserve – thanks be to God!

But David forgot that.

He said stupid and sinful things in his prosperity – he carries on with the story in verse 7:

**<sup>7</sup> By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.**

**<sup>8</sup> To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:**

**<sup>9</sup> “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?**

**<sup>10</sup> Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”**

Did you hear that? I was at the top of the mountain, Lord!! And then you hid your face from me and I was dismayed! I went from the TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN to the bottom of the PIT in half a heartbeat!

I went from boasting in myself to crying out for mercy:

**Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”**

Derek Kidner says here:

“Easy circumstances and a careless outlook are seldom far apart”<sup>3</sup>

And that’s the challenge, isn’t it?

God wants to bless us – the blessing isn’t BAD – the problem is that we are often not mature enough to handle those blessings. We become arrogant, we become complacent, we become forgetful and ungrateful towards the Lord.

That’s what happened to David - but thankfully David was always a good repenter. God REBUKED DAVID – and David immediately responded exactly the way you should. He fell on his face - he got some friends together, they fell on their faces – they cried out to the Lord - and the anger of the Lord turned away.

Calvin says here:

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<sup>3</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15 of Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 146.



“this is the chief advantage of afflictions, that while they make us sensible of our wretchedness, they stimulate us again to supplicate the favor of God.”<sup>4</sup>

God doesn't send afflictions because he likes sending afflictions - he sends afflictions because they are needed to cure us of arrogance and self-reliance. That was the EFFECT they had on David. They knocked him down and they brought him back to his senses – praise the Lord!

And that's where the story goes. Verses 11-12 contain the second of the 2 songs of praise.

## Song 2:

David says:

**<sup>11</sup> You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,**

**<sup>12</sup> that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever! (Psalm 30:0–12 ESV)**

I was DOWN and the Lord raised me UP – and from this place of rescue, from this SOLID GROUND - I will PRAISE HIM WITH ALL THAT I AM.

The Hebrew word David uses at the start of verse 12 is *KAVOD* – it means “glory” but it also means “centre of gravity”, “weight” or “fullness”.

David is saying, “From now, worship is going to be the main thing. From now on, the GLORY OF GOD is going to be my focus, my object and my passion.”

That's the Psalm – now what are we supposed to DO with this Psalm?

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries (Complete)*, trans. John King, Accordance electronic ed. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), paragraph 13607.

That is the question, we're supposed to be asking after reading a Psalm like that. St. Augustine told his people:

“Form thy spirit by the affection of the Psalm... If the Psalm breathes the spirit of prayer, do you pray; if it is filled with groaning, groan also thyself; if it is gladsome, do thou rejoice also .... Let the heart do what the words signify.”<sup>5</sup>

Let the heart DO what the words signify - well the words in Psalm 30 signify that we should PRAISE GOD BETTER and WORSHIP GOD MORE SUBSTANTIALLY on the way out of serious affliction and difficulty - so how do we do that?

Let me very quickly suggest 3 things we can DO to prepare our souls for serious joy on the other side of COVID19.

### **Preparing Our Souls For Serious Joy On The Other Side:**

First of all, we need to:

#### **1. Learn to kiss the wave**

That's a Spurgeon reference of course. Charles Spurgeon said famously:

“I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.”<sup>6</sup>

That's what suffering does. Suffering takes us from holding on to ourselves to holding on to God. It hurts us in the short term and it saves us in the long term. It anchors us in the place of eternal happiness and salvation.

Tim Keller in his devotional book on the Psalms says:

“Sometimes God allows a difficult season of “mighty waters” to be a kind of bit and bridle that pulls us back to him and shows us we need his friendship and love above all else.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine as cited in W.S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 2016), 6.

<sup>6</sup> You can read the quote and find a fuller explanation here: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/kissing-the-wave>

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus: A Year Of Devotions From The Psalms* (New York: Viking, 2015), 60.

That's a pretty decent summary of God's Providence over the last 15 months, wouldn't you say?

And yet, I think it would be fair to suggest that Christians by and large weren't thinking that way and talking that way prior to COVID19. Pre-COVID I think the church had become functionally dualistic. We credited all our blessings to God and all our hardships to the devil.

But the devil is just a dog on a chain.

The devil will always do what the devil does – he will bark and bite at God's people - but God holds the chain. Sometimes God will use the devil to chase us away from something or to humble us or to teach us – but the devil is always under his Sovereign and Benevolent control.

Interestingly, that fact is on particular display in the story behind Psalm 30. I read to you the opening line of the story as told in 1 Chronicles 21:

**Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel. (1 Chronicles 21:1 ESV)**

Well, there you have it! It was the devil's fault! This whole episode of suffering was instigated by Satan!

But hold on!

The same story is told in 2 Samuel 24 – do you remember how the story begins there? 2 Samuel 24 verse 1 says:

**Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 24:1 ESV)**

Are you seeing that? That's the same story! So actually, this entire episode was ordained by God - as a TEST – the failing of which – sent David and Israel into the School of Affliction for some remedial education – but the devil was just a TOOL that God used during part of the process.

It is so incredibly important for us to see that!

We waste so much time and so much energy **OBSESSING** over secondary causes!!

Oh the government!

Oh the tyranny!

Oh the nonsense!!

Goodness, gracious – don't waste a second of your life whining about the government. I've got news for you – the government is a dog on a chain as well! Proverbs 21:1 says:

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. (Proverbs 21:1 ESV)

God may use the government – and God may use the devil – but it is GOD who is the author of it all.

God **ORDAINED** this pandemic. It was a **TEST** and it was a **TRIAL** and it was **FOR OUR GOOD**.

Can you say **AMEN** to that?

Because if you can't then you aren't ready – you aren't **PREPARED** for serious joy on the other side.

So, learn to kiss the wave that throws you on the Rock of Ages. That wave may just save your eternal life.

Secondly:

## **2. Resolve to trust the Lord**

That was the main takeaway for David obviously from this entire ordeal. David had been trusting in himself. David had been trusting in his armies.

But after this?

David was trusting in the Lord.

So what were we trusting in prior to this trial that we ought not to trust in on the other side?

I think we were trusting in our EXCELLENT STAFF – we had really good people, doing really good work - so God and COVID took a few of them away.

I think we were trusting in our EXCELLENT PROGRAMS – we were the church that never slept, we were the church that had something for EVERYBODY – so the Lord and COVID blew IT ALL AWAY.

I think we were trusting in our STABILITY – we were slow and steady wins the race, we were onwards and upwards every year – so the Lord and COVID SHOOK THE CAGE!

Everything we might have put our hope in other than Jesus has been RATTLED over the last 15 months and I say – thanks be to God!

That's a good place. That's a much safer place, actually, so however we got here, I'm glad that we're here now.

And then lastly, we need to learn to kiss the wave, we need to resolve to trust the Lord and we need to:

## **3. Delight to sing his praises**

After he emerged from this devastating plague David said that from now on he was going to be CONSUMED with the WORSHIP of the Lord. He said, “God, you have:

“clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!” (Psalm 30:11–12 ESV)

“On the other side of this trial, I am making WORSHIP the centre and foundation of my life.”

That’s what David said; are you saying that?

Will WORSHIP be CENTRAL and FOUNDATIONAL for you and for your family moving forward?

You know, there are TWO WAYS that people can respond to a season such as the one we are coming out of now. Back in the days of the Spanish Flu, the mood of a lot of people seem to be:

“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” (Isaiah 22:13 ESV)

The Spanish Flu gave way to the Roaring 20’s which in turn gave way to the Great Depression – because people spent 10 years living like there was no tomorrow.

But there was.

And sooner or later, the bill comes due.

So that’s one approach. We could all spend money we don’t have, we could take vacations we can’t afford, we could give ourselves EVERYTHING WE’VE BEEN DENIED – we could EAT, DRINK and BE MERRY for tomorrow we die.

That could be the lesson coming out of this.

Or we could do what David did. We could RESOLVE to worship the Lord with our WHOLE LIVES. In view of God’s mercy, we could OFFER OUR LIVES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE.

We could go that route.

Now that doesn't mean we can't go on vacation, that doesn't mean we can't go out for dinner – that doesn't mean we can't enjoy our blessings. Remember – the BLESSING WAS NEVER THE PROBLEM. The problem was our SIN, ARROGANCE and COMPLACENCY.

The opposite of “let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” isn't “let's not eat, drink or be merry” – the opposite is:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV)

That's WHOLE LIFE WORSHIP!

It starts in here – and it FLOWS OUT THERE. That's what I'm talking about!

I don't want to be grouchy or withholding on the other side of COVID – I want to be a WHOLE LIFE WORSHIPPER!!

I want to be a THANKS GIVER!

I want to be a NEWS SPREADER.

I want to be a GLORY TO GOD BRINGER - that's what it means to live your life with God at the centre.

So let's do that! Let's make him the centre; let's make him the focus; let's make him our JOY – thanks be to God!

Let's pray together.