

Joy Will Come

Psalm 30

8/8/2021

Patrick Allen

Our passage this morning comes from Psalm 30, which as we said is meant to sort of be read in conjunction with Psalm 6, as almost like a response that God had done in Psalm 6. It was written, if you look at the header, as a dedication to the Temple. And, of course, like Moses, David would never see the fulfillment of that. And so it's interesting that this is his expression of thanks. And so we're going to look at it this morning. But let me read first, and then I'll pray, and just a few observations about our passage.

This is Psalm 30.

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

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 favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved. By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy: "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? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me! O Lord, be my helper!"

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and 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! [ESV]

Would you pray with me?

Father, these are your words. And for that, God, we are thankful this morning for them. As you speak tenderly into our hearts, Lord, I pray that you would work in spite of the limitations of me, that, God, you would be lifted high. It's in your name I pray. Amen.

During my senior year of college, I had a great opportunity to go and teach English at a university in East Asia. The trip was a collaboration between a couple of different churches including Chapelgate, my own home church, which at the time I was not there. My church was in Atlanta. But it was a collaboration between a couple of different churches. And we went over there. And I was excited, but I was really new. I was an English minor, and I had never taught ESL before, much less so in a foreign country. And so rightly, I was nervous about it. But my nerves were quickly assuaged as I was partnered with a very experienced woman, who was highly competent, highly experienced, and who was a great teacher, and who had been doing it for many years. And so secretly I was hoping that she would carry the weight of teaching, and that I would be able to soak up her many years of wisdom.

We arrived on a Friday, and we took the weekend to orient ourselves to the university and the students, to get to know the lay of the land. And we began to plan out our week. And we felt confident

and ready. We went into class on Monday morning. And my friend, my teacher—her name was Vicky (sic). She got a phone call that no parent ever wants to have. Her daughter was involved in a major car crash that had some catastrophic consequences. And so rightly so, she got on a plane and went back home. All we could do as a team was pray for her, pray that God would get her from point A to point B safely. You know, this is before cell phones and sort of all of that. And there was a lot of uncertainty. But we prayed for her.

While we were doing so, I began to realize quickly that I myself was in my own sort of crisis. I was now left to teach a bunch of university students English in a situation that I felt very unprepared for. But God was with me. And God is with you as well.

Maybe you all have felt that way. Maybe you've felt anxious. Maybe you've felt like you didn't have the tools to make life work on your own, whether it's with your family, or within your job, or even in your schools. Maybe you've been in a place where you needed help and didn't know where to turn. All of us at times find ourselves in difficult situations. Maybe you're here this morning, and you feel distant from God. Maybe you feel discouraged in your faith or beat up by life. The question this morning is where you turn. Where do you go? The reality of life in the fallen world is that all of us will encounter trouble. And so where do we go?

For those of us who are in Christ, Galatians teaches us that we've been given the Spirit. And so we walk in that. We aren't alone because God isn't finished with us.

And so with that, just a few observations about our passage. The first thing that we notice is that the gospel brings joy. The gospel brings joy. David's expressed his praise for what God has done and saying, "I will extol you. I will extol you," which is not really language we use today in our current context. But to extol is to lift up. It's to praise. It's to set on high. It's to proclaim, to worship. At the same time that David is lifting high the name of the Lord, he's making himself small.

This is the gospel paradox. Right? In order to find strength, we become weak. In order to be lifted high, we become low. This is how the economy of the gospel works. David had experienced God's divine rescue in his life in many different ways. Here's just three quick ones that bring about joy.

The first is that God protects David. He protects him. He's seen God's hand be upon him. David, of course, was under attack from his enemies at all times. We see this in first and second Samuel. And he draws this out in the metaphor of being pulled up out of the depth. Right? Which is like pulling a bucket out of a well. Right? It's coming from the low place and seeing God as the one reeling him in and lifting him high, God protecting David. We don't know what his foes were up to. We just know that in previous times that he had been under attack. And so God protects David. God heals David. Was David sick? Was he injured? Was he going through some mental challenges? We don't know.

But what we do know is what he writes in Psalm 34, that the Lord is near the brokenhearted. God is near those who are struggling and going through things. So God protects David. God rescues David from death. He rescues him from death. God reverses the direction of David's life. He goes from death to life, foreshadowing what Christ would do in the New Testament, taking the dry bones of our hearts and our souls and filling us with life by the power of His Spirit and the hope of the resurrection. There is no greater source of joy than in the resurrection of Christ, where all the disappointments, all the death, all the discouragements, all the grief, all the suffering that we face will eventually pass away because Christ has come, and He will make all things new including you and me.

Think about this. We see this in the New Testament where Jesus rescues the little girl in Mark 5 from death, or Lazarus, raising him from the dead in John 11, and ultimately resurrecting Himself. God is the restorer of life.

And David invites us to share in that joy, the joy of new life, by singing with thanksgiving. When David says, "Sing praises, you his saints," he uses the Hebrew word that shares the root with "hesed." "Hesed" in the Hebrew is a love that's connected to God's covenant faithfulness, loyal love, and mercy for His people. God certainly is faithful. He is the secure object that we place our hope in. But that doesn't mean that life in a fallen world is easy. Right?

Think of James 1. "Count it a joy, brother, when you encounter trials of various kinds. For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Sometimes the trials we face are there because we're living outside the bounds of what God said is good. We read that in our liturgy this morning, that God is a Father who lovingly disciplines His children. Right? A good father will bring us back in line with the good news of the gospel.

Sometimes things happen simply because we live in a fallen world where things are not the way they're supposed to be. This is why I love verse 6. "Weeping may tarry in the night, but joy comes in the morning." That word "tarry" is not also—is another one that we don't use much today. But it can be translated as, "At evening, weeping may arrive for the night." "He hangs out for the night." "He makes momentary place." But this pales in comparison to the eternal delight of the Lord. Right? The joy set before Christ. Right? It was the hope of eternity and the resurrection, the newness of life that sustained Christ.

In 2019, Netflix released Marie Kondo's *Tidying Up*. The basic premise is this: It's that as Americans, we tend to be very consumeristic, and that's led to an overabundance of stuff in our homes. And so she, as a Japanese de-clutterer, will go into families' homes and will go through the process of helping them minimize their lives to live the Japanese style life. And it's interesting. She'll walk with these people in their life and will go through their stuff, which is very personal. And she'll ask one prompt question. "Does this spark joy in your life?" You know, she'll pull out extra socks. "Do these socks spark joy?" "Do these t-shirts spark joy?" "Does this extra piece of furniture spark joy?" Right? None of those things in my mind really spark much joy. It's interesting because when that show went viral, Goodwill had a 25 percent uptick in donations. And the article that was written in response to some of this going on said that "Goodwill doesn't want our junk." Right?

True joy isn't found in de-cluttering our home, although let me say that can be helpful. Joy is found in our union with Christ. Think about it. That's why Paul writes in Philippians 4 from prison that he is free to declare that he has learned the secret of contentment in being hungry or being in want, that in Christ he finds his strength. It's in Christ.

You see, in Jesus we have one who has entered into the reality of our daily lives and who has brought about the hope of redemption. And so whether you're grieving this morning, whether you're uncertain about the next step to take in your career, or how to care for a child, or looking at the school year with dread because you're not sure what's going to happen—right? You can experience the love of the Father right now here in this place because of Jesus. And that has implications for joy here and now.

But we're forgetful people, which is why we see the second thing is that pride is really the enemy of faith. We can be prideful about all kinds of really good things. Right? Our careers, right? Although work is a pre-fall condition and it's good, trying to make that the main thing in our lives can define you and ultimately leave you feeling empty. We can be prideful about our families. What happens when kids don't measure up to your expectations for them? Are they loved for who they are rather than what they can do? What about our performance? We can take pride in our performance and our ability. What

happens when you fail? Are you so bound up with perfectionism that you're unable to actually enjoy life? Or self-fulfillment, finding things that are meaningful and rooting your life in things that are meaningful.

Friends, the human heart is naturally prideful, and David reflects this back. He says, "I said in my prosperity, 'I will never be moved.'" "It won't happen to me. There's no way." One translation read like this. It said, "I myself have said when I was doing well, 'I will never fall down.'" In our pride, we think we've got it. We don't need help. Right? We love the American ideal of the self-fulfilled man who pulled himself up by his bootstraps and did it all himself, that story of overcoming. Right? This view is especially true in the ancient world. Tim Keller writes this in *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*. He says, "Up until the 20th century, traditional cultures," and this is still true for most cultures in the world, "always believed that too high a view of yourself was the root cause of all evil in the world. Our belief today, and it is deeply rooted in everything, is that people misbehave for lack of self-esteem and because they have too low a view of themselves." Did you catch that?

The Psalms describe the wicked as those who have a puffed-up view of themselves. David writes in Psalm 10:6, "He says in his heart he shall not be moved. Throughout all generation, I shall not meet adversity." Of course we know David did struggle because we have the whole story. Right? He slept with Bathsheba. He had her husband put in harm's way. He did not get to build the Temple himself. Right? We see him, and we see his struggles on full bear in front of us. The truth is that we struggle as well.

Calvin once wrote that "Our hearts are like little idol factories. Every day we wake up, and we find a new idol created to replace the one that was destroyed the night before." The solution for David and for you and me is to turn and face God and to lay hold of His mercy.

David was king. He had all the power. He had all the influence. He had all the wealth. But none of it could save him from himself. All of those gifts, they came from God. They weren't his. He didn't earn them or deserve them. Pride confuses the giver and the gift, and David recognized that. As soon as God hid His face, everything goes away. As soon as His hand was taken from upon him, it was all lost. David's response to this wasn't to double down and work hard. It was to go back again to His Father and cry out, "Be merciful, God. Be merciful, God. Can you meet me here? Can you turn your face towards me? Can you intercede in this situation that's too heavy for me? O Lord, I need you."

I think of Isaiah 6, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." David's prayer wasn't for more wealth. It wasn't for more honor. It was to live for the glory of God. It's why he says, "Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?" This is the cry of someone who's trying to convince God that losing a worshiper is not a gain. "What glory will you get from this?"

I think about John 12 when Jesus was crying out to His Father, "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour.' But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

If you give your affection to any sports team, then you'll know how quickly happiness can go away. It's fleeting. Okay? I was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. And, you know, a few years ago, the Atlanta Falcons were in the Super Bowl, and they were up by 20 points over the New England Patriots. And as I watched the Super Bowl, I was like, "At last, you know, the New England Patriots and Tom Brady are going to lose. My dreams are going to come true. Atlanta will get a Super Bowl. And all will be right in the world." But like most Atlanta fans, I walked into that third quarter with a little bit of cynicism and skepticism. Why? Because I've seen the movie before. The 1991 Atlanta Braves, the '92 Atlanta Braves, the '98 and '99 Atlanta Braves, all lost the World Series. The '98 Atlanta Falcons lost the Super Bowl. The Hawks basketball team, my Hawks basketball team of the 1980's consistently lost to the Cavaliers and the Boston Celtics in the Playhouse. The University of Georgia, which I'm not really a fan of, lost

championships to Alabama. Roll Tide. The Georgia Tech Yellowjackets, which is the team that I grew up cheering for, lost the national championship in basketball to the Connecticut Huskies. Coming close but not winning is metro Atlanta's MO. And so it was no surprise when the Atlanta Falcons lost the Super Bowl. As I said, "I will never lay my affection on another Atlanta team."

Maybe for you, it's not a sports team, and the sports metaphor lost it on you. Maybe it's someone who's disappointed you in your life. Maybe it's a spouse, or a child, or a coworker. Maybe it's somebody that you know and are close to. Friends, happiness is so conditional, especially when you look to anything outside of Jesus for your ultimate hope and fulfillment. We weren't designed for that. Jesus, the only secure object of our faith, is the one who holds on to us as we wrestle—as we said this morning, we wrestle with life in a fallen world. And He invites you and I to let go, which is the opposite of pride, to meet our need, to become low, to become weak so that might be glorified.

The last thing we know is that His mercy is new every single day. Thankfulness always leads to worship. In verses 11 and 12, we see that David's response to God's mercy as he says, "You turn my mourning into dancing." We love that as Presbyterians, right? That mourning David is experiencing stems from the grief of God turning His face away from man.

This expression is used throughout scripture. In Psalm 10, the writer grieves that God is standing far away hiding Himself while all around him, the wicked seem to be prospering. In Exodus 33, Moses wanted to see the glory of the Lord, but His face—he wanted to see God's face, but God said, "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." The dancing is the very opposite of mourning, pure unadulterated joy.

If you want to see—if you ever want to have a good wedding reception, this is my pastor pro-tip for this morning. You want to invite high school students to your wedding. My wife and I have been married 17 years this year. And thinking back about the thing I remember most, besides her walking down the aisle and the ceremony, was the reception and the dancing. It was at a large church. I want to say that we had 500 people, which she'll probably correct me on that, at our reception. And the dancing was amazing. It was a celebration. Many of those high school students came to our reception. And there was a blast. I mean, I had my 80-year-old grandmother out on the dance floor. It was just the celebration of the union of two people.

David rejoiced. God rescued him. And now the whole world would know. When David says, "You have loosed my sackcloth," he's referring to his lament. Just as God took off David's lament, God has clothed him with inward joy. He's taken something off, and He's put something back in. The one who did all of this wasn't David. God is the one who clothed him with joy so that he might sing the praises and not be silent.

In verse 12, he says, "My glory." And here, David is referring to himself because he is a child of God, because he is valuable, because he's an image bearer. We are His image bearers, the very pinnacle of His creative act meant to embody imperfectly the beauty and wonder of God Himself. So David's life becomes a megaphone for God's glory.

Dick and Rick Hoyt are a father and son pair who for many years have competed in races all over the country. You'd recognize them because Rick is paralyzed. Dick just passed away I think two years ago. But Rick has been paralyzed for his whole life. He was born with cerebral palsy. And for many years, he couldn't speak until technology enabled him to do that. When he was in high school in the 1970's, he asked his dad, I guess through a computer, if he could run a race for a friend. He had a friend in his high school who became paralyzed at a lacrosse game, and they were doing a 5K fundraiser. Well, you think about the mechanics of that and the logistics. It's very difficult. In the 1970's, how do you push a

wheelchair in a 5K? Nonetheless, Dick decided to make this happen. And so he started pushing his son in these races. And it was after that first race that Rick turned to his dad and said, "Dad, for the first time in my life, I feel like I'm not paralyzed." And that started them on a journey. For the next 30 years, they raced in 5K's, 10K's, Iron Man triathlons, all over the country, one pushing the other.

Friends, we have one in Jesus who carries us along by His Spirit. He is the one who's borne all the weight of our sin and shame. He tirelessly carries us along. He's not overwhelmed by our human limitations and by our fragility, by the things that we carry every single day because He has borne them Himself. And because He entered in, there is newness of life. And we carry this message, each of us, where we live, work, play, and learn. We announce, "The King has come," whether it's in our home, at work, in our neighborhood, with our family. We don't carry it alone because we have His Spirit. He has clothed you and I in perfect righteousness. In Jesus, we have the promise that all our tears, all our suffering will end, and we will forever celebrate at the wedding feast of the lamb because Jesus has come and has made all things new, including you and me.

Friends, this is a message of hope. This is what we announce. This is the good news. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. That God, just as has been said many times by many others, it's not the strength of our faith, but you that's the object that carries us, Lord. And we rejoice in that. We thank you that it was never us that could do it even for a minute, but that you have done it. And so, Father, as we go into our week, Lord, I would pray that you would strengthen us for the journey ahead by your grace through Jesus. It's in His name we pray. Amen.