

From Despair to Delight

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: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Johan DeJong

[0:00] All right. In a moment, we're going to hear the Bible read. I don't know what you think of the Bible, how you feel about the Bible. I think sometimes we think of it a bit like this, a rock, which is kind of there, maybe not very interesting, a bit boring perhaps.

I want to encourage you to think that the Bible is more than just a boring rock that just sits there and does nothing. If you look inside it, it actually has immense beauty and hope and inspiration to offer us because it's God speaking to us.

About 150 years ago, there was a man called Henry David Thoreau who was a thinker and he said, after observing the world, thinking about it, what's going on here, he said, the mass of humanity lives lives of quiet desperation.

In other words, if you don't get all that, you know, talk, behind the mask, life is hard. Life is a struggle. Maybe even life is war. Do you ever feel that? Something's going on. There's a quiet desperation in our lives. Not always, but there's a struggle.

And in the song that we're about to hear read, which Asha's going to come and read for us in a moment, it's like David who wrote the song, takes off the mask.

[1:37] All right? So I'd love you to listen as David lifts the mask on the daily struggle of our lives and Psalm 13 is read. Over to you, Asha. Thanks. So this is Psalm 13 and it's page 548 in the Church Bibles.

Thanks, Asha. Bethel, we believe that God speaks to us through his word today. So we're just going to pray really quickly before we look at that Psalm. Let's pray.

Lord God, nothing that I can say or that any of us can say can change the inside of a human heart for eternity. We need you for that. Lord, we need you to explain yourself, reveal yourself to us through your word.

Please, would you do that for us this morning? We need the words of eternal life. In Jesus' name. Amen. Can you imagine what it's like to go from that quiet desperation to delight in 60 seconds? Because that's what's just happened in the psalm that we've read. It took less than a minute to read, but if you look at those words, he's gone from hopeless, quiet desperation to delighting in something in under a minute.

[3:28] How is that possible? How can we do, how does that happen? Let's look at verses 1 and 2 together.

We're going to be using the words that the kids had at Holiday Bible Club. Here we go. How long, Lord, will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?

If you think the Bible is a boring, irrelevant book, this makes us think again, doesn't it? This is so real. We all have thoughts that we wrestle with every single day that give us grief.

Why won't this thing in my head go away? Why is that person always like that? Why do I keep feeling I'm a failure?

[4:24] Why do I keep on doing this thing even though I know that it's wrong and it's bad for me? Why am I still struggling with the same thing that I thought that I dealt with months ago?

Why do I keep on doing this thing? Why do I keep on doing this thing? Why do I keep on doing this thing? How long will this go on? We live with those things, don't we? And if we don't right now, then we have or we will.

You can walk through the school gates, smile, chat with everyone, still feel like the loneliest person on earth. You can have a family who loves you, really loves you, does their best to care for you and still feel that nobody in the world really understands.

You can have hundreds of social media friends and you look down the list and you think, is there anybody that I could actually call to say, do you know what, I'm really struggling. You can sit in your car or on the bench outside your house, not wanting to go in because you don't have the energy to put the mask on again.

Maybe like me, you can see your bad habits, your selfishness, what used to be called our besetting sins. You can see them, but you can't seem to defeat them.

[5:46] Instead, you feel defeated by them. And then there's the spiritual battle. Have you had one of those experiences? I think most people have.

Where you know there's something dark going on. Can't quite put your finger on it. You don't know quite where it's coming from or what it is.

But you know it's not natural. And it's not good. It's because we're in a supernatural battle between good and evil. That's what David's talking about, the enemy. And sometimes it feels like that enemy is winning.

Maybe you believe in God. But you can't find him. Or you pray, but the words just disappear into the ceiling.

It's not that you're thinking, there's no God. That's Psalm 14. Come back next week for that. It's more that you're thinking, God, where are you in all of this?

[6:50] Where are you? This is someone who's stumbling, isn't it? David is stumbling, just like we all stumble sometimes.

Somebody who's about to trip. Someone who's broken by what's wrong inside them. Broken by what's wrong in the world outside us.

Defeated. And do you know what? There is no stern shake of the head from God when we think like this and when we share those thoughts with him.

In fact, God puts it in the Bible so that we can have the words to express how we feel. So we can connect with the God who gave us those words. In fact, what we really need to hear is Jesus singing these words for us.

Just like, you know, when you go to a concert and you hear the orchestra playing, what you're actually hearing is the thoughts of the composer, isn't it? Jesus sings these words with us and for us.

[7:54] You know, the wonderful thing is God does not want us to stay in that place. He doesn't want us to stay here, sad and stuck and looking inward.

Maybe blaming God. And lots of us do get stuck there, don't we? I do, sometimes. He doesn't want us to. He wants us to turn.

He wants us to turn to him. Let's look at verses three and four together. Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes or I will sleep in death. And my enemy will say I have overcome him. And my foes will rejoice when I fall.

Can you see here that David wants to be seen and heard? Doesn't he? We kind of all want that. We want to be seen and heard even more sometimes than we want our problems to go away. We want them to matter.

[8:53] We want them to mean something to somebody who cares for us. Somebody who can do something about these things. So David turns to his Lord. David wants God to see him.

And that makes complete sense because if there is a God who is in charge and who plans all things for our good, then our struggles mean something. So David turns to God and he says, God, I need you in this.

But he doesn't just want God to see him. He wants God to help him see. Did you see that? Give light to my eyes.

He wants God to give him a new perspective. He wants God to give him the eyes of faith so he can see the truth of the situation that he finds himself in. The reality of his own heart. And so that he can get out of his own head.

He wants God's help in fighting off that quiet desperation. The despair. The devil. He needs the look of life.

[10:08] Look on me, Lord my God. And we need that look. Because actually it's only when God opens our eyes and gives us new spiritual life that we can overcome that quiet despair.

The enemy outside. Even death. Only when God gives us eyes of faith and helps us to be born again will we see the struggles, verse 1 and 2, in the light of eternity. In the light of God's power. And his love for us. If you come here often, you'll know that I'm a fan of C.S. Lewis. Who wrote the Narnia Chronicles and lots of other wonderful books. C.S. Lewis says this.

I believe in the Christian God as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.

So we need to turn to him. So that we can see this world and our own hearts and our struggles for what they are.

[11:18] We need to turn away from our own path and our own solutions, which is how we've ended up where we are. And turn to God. Let's keep looking.

Verses 5 and 6. Here we go. But I trust in your unfailing love. My heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise for he has been good to me.

And the original language actually is not just he's kind of been nice. It's like his overflowing stream of goodness has covered me. That's what David is saying.

And you look at verse 5 and 6 and you think, is this even the same guy who wrote verse 1 and 2? But how did he get here? David has trusted God.

And David's heart has been completely transformed by looking at who God is and looking back at what Jesus has done for us. Looking back at God's goodness in the past to David.

[12:28] And that's the move that God is inviting you to make today. It is to put your trust in who he is and to look back at what Jesus has done.

What he's done in history. His unfailing love. His saving of us from death. His overflowing goodness to us. For this psalm, the Bible says, speaks of Jesus.

Look, if you go to the New Testament, Luke chapter 24, verse 14, this is Jesus speaking, he said to them, this is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that it is written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

So looking back, as we're invited to, where does Jesus show us God's unfailing love and his salvation on the cross?

When we look back for evidence of God's overflowing goodness, what do we see? Jesus on the cross. Who does the Bible say, echoing the verse 1, was forgotten by God?

[13:46] Jesus on the cross. Who does the Bible describe as the man of sorrows who endured sorrow day by day?

Jesus on the cross. Who cries for God to raise him from the dead so that his enemy will not triumph over him? Jesus on the cross.

Who enables us to rejoice that we've been saved even as we're struggling? It's Jesus on the cross. And when we cry out, God, give light to my eyes so that I will not sleep in death and my enemy will not triumph over me.

Who do we see? We see the risen Jesus victorious over death who has defeated the enemy within and the enemy outside.

And trusting in Jesus in his death for us on the cross, in his rising again from the dead, that is what transforms us and what takes us from despair to delight.

[15:02] It is looking at God and what God has done. See, externally, nothing has changed for David in the 60 seconds it took to write that psalm, sing that psalm, read that psalm.

Nothing. His situation is exactly the same except that internally God has given light to his eyes and the sun has risen revealing the rock-solid love and salvation of God that was there all along.

So it's not about being good enough, it's not about ticking the boxes, it's not about doing all your religious duties, it's about trusting Jesus and being transformed by him from despair to delight.

Here's how another part of the Bible puts it, it is by grace, God's undeserved goodness to us that you have been saved and that not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one should boast.

God's grace, no we don't deserve it, but God's enormous generosity, his overflowing goodness gives us this unfailing love and salvation, causes Jesus to hang there on the cross, taking the punishment for our sins, raises Jesus from death so that we can have the hope of life forever.

[16:34] That's what the Bible message is, that's what the message of Psalm 13 is, that's what Holiday Bible Club has been all about, that's hope for the world. We all trip, don't we?

We all need to turn away from self, we need to trust in God and be transformed in the end from despair to delight. I just invite you to pray with me as we finish.

Lord Jesus, we confess that we have not done things your way as a world, as individuals. We've tripped up big time.

Lord Jesus, we want to turn to you and put our trust in what you have done and who you are. Thank you for dying for us on the cross and rising again to give us eternal life.

Please fill us with your Holy Spirit and transform us from despair to eternal delight. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.