

# Roadkill

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, well this morning we come to our last psalm in our summer series through the psalms. It's hard to believe already that summer's gone and we're heading into September here, but we are looking at Psalm 49 today.

So if you have your Bible with you, you can open it up to Psalm 49. And instead of reading it all through at the beginning here, I'm going to kind of read through it bit by bit as we go.

So Psalm 49, let me just pray and then we'll jump in. Father in heaven, thank you for your word. Thank you for the power that is in your word.

And we ask that you would give us ears to hear in these moments. We ask that you would speak directly to our hearts. That you would convict us, that you would encourage us, that you would reveal your truth to us, and that we would be changed forever because of what we hear.

in your word. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So as you can see from the superscription at the top of the psalm, it says, For the director of music of the sons of Korah.

[ 1 : 16 ] A psalm. So this was written by the sons of Korah. Korah was a descendant of Levi. Levi was one of the 12 sons of Israel. And way down the line, some of Korah's descendants were installed by King David as musical worship leaders at the tabernacle and later at the temple.

This is all about a thousand years before Christ came. And one of these guys, or maybe one or two of them, wrote this psalm and gave it to the director of music.

So this was actually sung at the tabernacle and probably later at the temple. And if we look at verse 4 there on the screen, we see that the writer was a harpist.

The actual word is lyre, so you can imagine that little U-shaped harp that you can almost hold in your lap. That was the instrumentation of this song. So as we work through this, keep that in mind, that this is music, this is song lyrics all the way through.

The opening lyrics of this song invite us to listen. Verses 1 to 4. Hear this, all you peoples.

[ 2 : 29 ] Listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike. My mouth will speak words of wisdom. The meditation of my heart will give you understanding.

I will turn my ear to a proverb. With the harp, I will expound my riddle. So the first thing that the songwriter does is he asks for our attention.

He says, Hear this. Listen. Give me your ear for a moment. Now who is his intended audience? Who is he talking to?

Who is this song for? Hear this, all you peoples. Listen. All who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike.

So right out of the gate, he lets us know that this song is for everyone. All peoples. All who live in this world. That's as broad as it gets. Doesn't matter whether you're upper class, famous, influential, popular, or whether you're lower class.

[ 3 : 40 ] Doesn't matter whether you're rich, or you're well-to-do, you've got the means, or whether you're poor, or whether you're struggling, trying to get by. This song is for you.

So this is how he starts. Listen up, everybody. This song is for you. No matter who you are, give me your ear for a moment. Verse three, I have some wisdom to speak to you.

There's something I've been meditating on in my heart. And with this song, I'd like to give you that same understanding. I'd like to share that wisdom with you so that you can be wise.

So we get a bit of a clue about the kind of song that this is. Even though it's going to be sung at the tabernacle, it's not a song of praise. It's not even addressed to God.

It's not a prayer. This is a wisdom song. And the purpose of it is to impart God's wisdom to the hearer, to make us wise.

[ 4 : 44 ] If we look at verse four there, we see that this is almost like Proverbs set to music. It's the clever sayings of the wise explained, revealed with an instrument.

So this is how the song begins. He begins by asking for our attention and offering words of wisdom. And then immediately following this, he introduces the main theme of the song.

He puts the theme in the form of a rhetorical question in verses five and six. Why should I fear when evil days come?

When wicked deceivers surround me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches. So this song has one big question and this is it.

And it's the big question because it's the only question in the whole song. It's the main question.

Everything that follows is the answer to this question. And it's a big question.

[ 5 : 46 ] I mean, it's a long question. It's got lots of phrases and parts to it. But if we boil it down and simplify it, the question is, why should I fear when evil days come?

And then these lines which follow kind of explain more about that. What is it that makes these days evil? And he puts words to this.

These are days when wicked deceivers surround me. In particular, those who trust in their wealth.

These are wealthy wicked deceivers.

They're people who are boasting of their great riches. So there's a lot here. Notice that word surround. All around me.

And the temptation is to fear. To be afraid. To be anxious. To be worried. Because these are men of great power.

[ 6 : 50 ] They're wealthy. And with their wealth, they're not known for giving that money to charity. And doing nice things to help people in need. They're known for their deceitfulness.

And their cruelty. This was written in troubling days. If you've been reading through the Old Testament, I'm not sure if you've got to that point yet. Hopefully.

In your Bible reading this year. The book of Judges. It was a time of great trouble in the history of Israel. There was war.

There was lawlessness. There was tribalism. There were enemy kings and nations and raiders and armies. And finally, Israel did get their own king.

But then things didn't go all too well with him. There was more wars. There was more battles. There was corruption. There was oppression. Those things were normal.

[ 7 : 50 ] Finally, they did put King David on the throne of Judah. But even after that, there was still a lot of turmoil in those early years of David's reign. And so, this is how things have been for people leading up to this song being written.

Even within the land of Israel, amongst ethnically related peoples, there hasn't been stability. There often hasn't been justice. The strong and the wealthy and the powerful often trampled the weak and the poor.

And so, we have to know that this question in verse 5 probably struck a chord in the hearts of the people in these days. They knew what it was like to live with fear and anxiety, with insecurity.

They'd seen some evil days, either witnessed it or some of them even been victims. The wealthy and the powerful, they were those people who bullied, who oppressed, who stole, and often there was no justice and nobody to stand up to those guys.

So there's a sense in which this question may feel a little bit far away to us today, a little bit irrelevant because, if we're honest, we all enjoy a good measure of peace and safety here in these days, in this place.

[ 9 : 16 ] We don't feel imminently threatened by the wicked or by wealthy people all around us. But, you know, as I thought about this some more, I realized that maybe this is a little more relevant after all.

I mean, it was just a couple years back when I watched as the temperature, even here in our own church, changed as we endured the whole COVID thing. Fear rose in many of our hearts.

Anxiety, stress. We all struggled as we talked to different people and heard different things in the news and online and we struggled to know who's telling the truth and who are those people who are trying to deceive us.

Many became increasingly dissatisfied with leaders and politicians in government and rightly so because we hear about all kinds of corruption.

We hear about scandals. We hear about lies. We hear about promises that are not being kept and we know that many in power in our own country are the wealthy.

[10:32] We know that they're manipulating and maneuvering oftentimes behind the scenes. Now, COVID is over. At least, that's my opinion.

But still today, we're seeing the prices of gas and food and groceries increasing. Then we look over and we see others around us who somehow are able to afford a brand new car or holiday trailer or house or whatever, go on an expensive vacation.

So are we immune to this fear that evil days have come? I don't think so. Are we tempted to fret as we watch some around us prospering, getting things easy while we struggle to pay the bills?

I think so. This is the amazing thing here. He raises all of this with a question but it's a rhetorical question.

He's not asking it because he doesn't know the answer. He does know the answer. He's actually making a statement like, why should I fear when evil days come?

[11:53] When wicked deceivers surround me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches. It's a statement. I'm not going to fear in evil days.

I'm not going to worry about the wicked or what they might do to me. I'm not going to envy the rich. Those who take such confidence in their wealth or boast in their possessions, their investment holdings, their bank accounts.

And why not? Well, the rest of the psalm is the answer. It's the reasons and we're going to look at two main reasons. We'll see two main reasons come out. And the first one we'll just lay it out right up front and then we'll see it.

I'm not going to fear in evil days when the wicked, when the wealthy surround me, when they're prospering. And his answer is basically this because they're all going to die and lose everything. They will get what they deserve and no amount of wealth will keep them from that. Let's see this starting in verse 7. He says, he asked the question, why should I fear when evil days come?

[13:13] No one, verse 7, can redeem the life of another or give a ransom to God for them. The ransom for a life is costly. No payment is ever enough so that they should live on forever and not see decay.

So there's a great leveler, he says, that's coming for all of us and that's death. And no amount of money, no amount of possessions, no amount of health care coverage can change the fact that someday you will die.

and in these verses he makes it quite clear, it doesn't matter how much money you have, it's not enough. You can't buy an unending life from God.

You can't stave off death forever. Death came to humanity as a punishment from God for sin and you can't pay your own ransom or the ransom of another to God so that he's going to somehow grant you to live forever.

Both low and high, rich and poor alike, we all die and our bodies see decay. They come to rot in the ground.

[14:38] Verse 10, for all can see that the wise die, that the foolish and the senseless also perish, leaving their wealth to others.

Money can do a lot of good things but there's one thing that it cannot do. It cannot keep us from the punishment that we all deserve for our sins.

Sooner or later, one way or another, death will have all of us whether you are a wise person or a fool. And on that day, he says, all the wealth you have will be left for another.

Verse 11, their tombs will remain their houses forever. Their dwellings for endless generations though they had named lands after themselves.

Now there's a bit of a translation variance here depending on what translation in English you have. It'll read a little differently but in either case, it's about the permanence and finality of death despite the pride and the presumption of the wicked.

[16:00] Even though they lived in houses, strong, established dwelling places that they thought would last forever. They even named land after themselves, laying claim to it.

This is my territory. Yet it's the tomb over in the hillside that will be their house, their dwelling place forever. as it says in verse 12, people despite their wealth do not endure.

They are like the beasts that perish. Again, the main point here, death is inevitable. It's coming. It's coming for you. One way or another, sooner or later, wise or foolish, it doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter how much money you have, doesn't matter how many possessions you have or what quality they are, doesn't matter how sturdily you built your house or what kind of renovations you did to it, none of these things will stop your day from coming.

[ 17 : 12 ] Your net worth, the minute after you die, will be the same as everybody else's net worth the minute after they die. That thing you bought or built might have been built to last, but what does that matter if you aren't here to make use of it?

It's going to be someone else's soon. People, despite their wealth, do not endure. They are like the beasts that perish.

How many of you have seen something like this in your travels this summer so far? After about almost 5,000 kilometers to Indianapolis and back, I saw quite a lot of roadkill on the side of the road. Got thinking about that. The beasts that perish, that roadkill on the side of the road, that's what things will be like for you and for me.

Soon enough. Now, of course, with roadkill, the end of that animal's life was sudden and violent, but regardless, death was coming for that critter at some point.

[ 18 : 32 ] We all know that. Animals don't live forever, and the truth is that he's saying here, neither do we. We are like them in that regard.

We, too, will perish. Our time will come. Verse 13, this is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers who approve their sayings.

They are like sheep and are destined to die. Death will be their shepherd. Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.

That contrasts in verse 14 is pretty powerful. Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.

Think about your house, all that you've put into it, but that's not where you will end up. You'll end up about a mile west of town in the Davidson Cemetery, unless, of course, you have another cemetery picked out.

[ 19 : 40 ] and there he says, your body will decay. Far from your house. Again, the point that he's making, I'm not going to fear in evil days when the wicked, when the wealthy surround me, when they prosper, because they're all going to die.

We're all going to die and lose everything, and they will get what they deserve, and no amount of wealth will keep them from it. And there's a lesson here, verse 16.

He says, do not be overawed when others grow rich, when the splendor of their houses increase. That word overawed is maybe a little bit misleading.

It almost sounds like, whoa, but really it means to be greatly afraid, or overly concerned, or worried, and it just ties right back in with the big question.

Why should I fear? He says, don't worry about them. Don't fear. Don't get bent out of shape when the wicked around grow rich, when the world prospers.

[ 20 : 54 ] Why not? Because, verse 17, for they will take nothing with them when they die. Their splendor will not descend with them.

Though while they live, they count themselves blessed, and people praise you when you prosper, they will join those who have gone before them, who will never again see the light of life.

Again, don't worry. Don't be overly concerned in evil days as the wicked seem to get their way, as they prosper, because they're all going to die and lose everything.

They'll get what they deserve, which here is described as never again see the light of life. Think about that.

That's eternal darkness, eternal death. They will never again see the light of life. life. Maybe you've heard it said, there's no U-Haul behind the hearse.

[ 22 : 06 ] I think Billy Graham was known for saying that. Apparently Denzel Washington was too. And how this picture came to be, I have no idea. Maybe somebody thought they'd just do it for a joke.

But I like that saying, there's no U-Haul behind the hearse. You can't take your possessions with you when you die. You can't take your money with you.

Death separates you permanently from all your stuff. You leave it all behind. And so again, he charges us, don't worry, don't get bent out of shape.

When you see other people getting ahead, prospering, getting rich, getting into those positions of power and influence all around you, they won't have those things for long.

They're going to lose it all. And he ends in verse 20 with a similar statement to that in verse 12. People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish.

[ 23 : 10 ] It's hard to imagine that as kind of the clincher phrase of the song. Like the beasts that perish, you know. Just not a pleasant feeling. But this is a wisdom psalm.

And his first answer to this big question, don't worry. Don't worry when evil days come. The people that make those days evil, they're going to lose it all when they die.

And they will get what they deserve. And their money can't save them from that. Their positions, their power can't save them from that. What's the big issue here with these people?

people. It is a problem that they are wicked. It is a problem that they're deceitful. It is a problem in verse 11 that they're proud.

But probably all of those things are more symptoms of a deeper problem. I think verse 6 highlights what their problem is. They are those who trust in their wealth.

[ 24 : 17 ] They are those who boast of their great riches. Money is the thing that they put their hope in. Their stuff. Their bank accounts, their cars, their houses, their properties.

Verse 16. Beautifying their houses, making the splendor of their house increase. We're talking expensive renovations, luxurious things, fine furniture.

lavish comforts. These are the things that matter most to these people. And it's not just that they trust in it, but they boast in it. They love it. They celebrate it.

And when the days become evil, they look at what they have as their security, their protection. In verse 13, they are further described as those who trust in themselves.

They foolishly put confidence in what they have achieved for themselves. But according to the songwriter, their confidence is terribly misplaced.

[ 25 : 26 ] It's utterly short-sighted. Their confidence is based on a lie. This lie that they will live on forever.

That they will never face a trouble that their money can't fix. And so they are fools. they are those who lack understanding.

In verse 20. So I found a question in here that I thought I'd just ask this morning. As you think about some of these things that we're hearing in this psalm, what would you say is the greater danger for you personally?

Is it being overly concerned about others prospering all around us? Or is it falling for the same lie that they do?

What's the greater temptation for you? The greater problem? Is it being overly concerned, fearful, worried about those around us who are prospering, who are getting ahead, who are jockeying, who are doing things that are not good?

[ 26 : 41 ] Or is the greater temptation for you falling for that same lie that they do? I can get that. I'll be happy. Then I'll really have life.

We've already looked at the answer, number one, to this big question. But there's a secondary answer nestled within this. If this is how it goes at the end of our lives, then we should also know that we shouldn't be among those who desire wealth like they do.

We shouldn't be among those who trust in it, who look to money and stuff and houses for fulfillment. their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.

But, verse 15, some of you have been waiting, where's the good news in this? But, here it is, verse 15, God will redeem me from the realm of the dead.

God, he will surely take me to himself. So, there is hope. There is an alternative to putting your trust in wealth, in your stuff, in your possessions.

[ 28 : 10 ] You can put your hope in God. You can put your trust in him. And, here in verse 15, the singer tells us that his confidence is that his fate is going to be totally different from those who trust in themselves.

God will redeem me from the realm of the dead. He will surely take me to himself. So, death is still coming. He's still going to the realm of the dead.

He knows this. But, there's a hope beyond that. Because, God will redeem me. He will buy me back from death. This word takes us back to verse 7.

No one can redeem the life of another so that they should live on forever and not see decay. But, wait. There is someone who can pay death's ransom.

There is one who has enough to redeem us, to ransom us from the eternal clutches of death. God will redeem me.

[ 29 : 15 ] Quite literally. God will redeem my soul, my life, from the hand of Sheol. Sheol. Now, Sheol was that ancient Hebrew proper name for the realm of the dead.

And, here, Sheol is personified as if it was like a powerful being who's got his hand outstretched to receive you when you die. And, so, it's beautiful how he phrases this.

God is going to pay the ransom to set me free from the grip of death. He's going to receive me. Death's hand is not going to receive me.

He's going to receive me. He's going to take me to himself. So, the psalmist has this beautiful confidence and hope in God that even though he will die, just like everybody else, God is able to rescue him from that.

Do you hear this contrast in verses 14 and 15? Their forms will decay in the grave far from their princely mansions, but God will redeem me from the realm of the dead.

[ 30 : 26 ] So, you look at those people over in the cemetery there. Because I trust in the Lord, my fate will not be the same as theirs, is what he's saying.

The ultimate end of my life, my story, will not be that my body just rotted away in the grave. I may go into that grave, but I'm coming out of it because God will ransom me from the hand of Sheol and receive me to himself.

We skipped over a part of verse 14 here in parentheses. He said, they are like sheep and are destined to die.

Death will be their shepherd, but the upright will prevail over them in the morning. I love this statement. So here's the second answer to this big question.

Why shouldn't I fear when evil days come, when the wicked prosper all around me? Because we who are upright and trust in God will prevail over the wicked in the end. This is the long view.

[ 31 : 38 ] This is the truth of what's coming. In other words, God may allow evil days to come here on earth.

He may allow wicked deceivers to afflict his people, but it's just momentary for a short time, like the darkness of night. But dawn is coming.

Morning is coming. A new day is coming for this world. And when it comes, the righteous, the upright, those who trust in the Lord, they will prevail over the wicked.

I love that language. It speaks of triumph. It assures us that no matter what people do here on this earth, we need not be worried. We don't need to fret.

We don't need to be anxious or fearful because in the long scheme of things, justice is coming. And the tables will be turned. That great leveler, death is coming.

[ 32 : 39 ] for all of us. And at the end, when the sun rises, when Jesus Christ returns in glory, God will vindicate his people.

He'll put us on the victor's throne. So this song, I mean, it really drives us to this most important question. Have you put your trust in the Lord?

Lord, is your hope in him? Is he your treasure? Are you depending on him?

Is he the one that you're living for? A thousand years later, God sent his son, Jesus. And Jesus, amazingly, not really surprisingly, preached the same message.

on one occasion, Mark 8, 36, he asked this question, what good is it for someone to gain the whole world yet forfeit their soul? Same kind of idea in this psalm.

[ 33 : 43 ] He went on and asked a follow-up question. What can anyone give in exchange for their soul? Answer, nothing.

No payment is enough. It's the same message. He said, do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.

One of my favorite sayings of Jesus to Mary, I am the resurrection and the life, he said. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

He preached the same message. As God in the flesh, he called people to trust in him and in the Father. He promised eternal life, resurrection, raising him up at the last day, and then he went on to pay the ransom for us that God's penalty of death required.

He died on the cross to redeem us, to buy us back for God. He came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[ 35 : 10 ] Three days after he died, God gave us the ultimate sign that the hope of this songwriter here in verse 15 was well placed. God raised Jesus back to life from the dead, and his promise is that he will do the same for all who trust in the Lord, who trust in him.

Have you put your trust in him? It's the most important decision of life. There are only two fates to be had. Which do you choose?

Once we've got that straight, and I'll end with this, there are two questions that this song leads us to, and I just want to leave these with you to think about through the week. The first question is this, have I got my priorities straight?

Have I got my priorities straight? Oh, this song hits us there about this. And two, am I fretting needlessly about others?

We may need to confess some things to God today or this week, and to repent. We may need to come back to the priorities that he has for us. We may need to find the peace that he has for us, for our hearts today.

[ 36 : 41 ] Let's pray. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for this sober reminder that you've given us in this song, that our lives are short, and that we can waste our lives going after things that we will lose.

And I pray that you would do that work in our hearts, that you would put that wisdom inside of us, convict us of our sins, Lord, set our priorities straight.

Forgive us for those times, those moments where we have chased after the stuff of this world. We ask for that peace, that security that cannot be shaken by anything.

Put our eyes on Jesus and on the life that he gives. We ask in his name. Amen. Amen.