

How long, O Lord?

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Date: 27 October 2024

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[0:00] Follow along there. I'd like to read that psalm again. If it's in your reading, then we'll pray.!

Psalms 13. How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and answer me, O Lord my God. Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.

Lest my enemy say, I have prevailed over him. Lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your steadfast love.

My heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me. Let us pray.

[1:00] Lord, we come before you this morning as your people, confessing that we live in a broken world full of sin, full of injustice, full of hurt and pain.

And perhaps many of us, even now, identify with the psalmist in this psalm. But we also know that you are the God who saves, you are the God who is worthy of our trust.

And so we come, our hearts, bare open before you. Will you meet us in the preaching of your word this morning? Will you minister to us in the deepest places of our hearts?

Will you remind us of your great salvation? We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalms are the sung book of God's people.

Both for Israel in the Old Testament, and for the church in the New Testament. I don't know if you've ever thought of the Psalter that way. They're the sung book of God's people.

[2:05] Within the Psalms, one will find all different kinds of genres of songs, for lack of a better word. Well, they are songs.

Again, as I said already, they're sung books of God's people. Different keys in the Psalms. And because the Psalms are directed to God, they're sung as God's people, in the assembly of God's people, but really they have one audience.

It's God. They're sung to God. And because they are directed to God, they're not just a sung book, they're also a prayer book. There are prayers in the Psalms, prayers of thanksgiving, of intercession, on behalf of others, and petitions and supplications, on behalf of oneself.

This is why the Psalms are appropriate to read on a daily basis, as we do in our daily office. That's the wisdom of keeping the daily office, is that it allows you to read through the Psalms, from chapter 1, Psalm 1 to Psalm 150, at least once every month, or every two months, depending on the pace that you go at it.

We are, as God's people, we are to go to the Psalms, when happy and joyous. And when life seems to crumble all around us, and we find enemies, and hardships, and all sides, the Psalms are even more appropriate, at those moments.

[3:36] Within its pages, we find songs of joy, and songs of lament. songs that tell us, that tell us of God's encompassing faithfulness, and care.

And in those kind of songs, there are songs that I would like to say, are in the major keys. And then there are songs, such as the one we read this morning, in minor keys.

The blues, as it were. The songs that cries out in pain, and distress at God. The psalmist here, is singing the blues.

But, as we said already, it's not for a human audience. Rather, a song is meant for God, the omnipotent, all-powerful God, that he may hear him.

And that's, and that's what we see in this psalm. It is a psalm of lament, and it's a, it's a, it's a cry, a personal cry of anguish.

[4:38] The psalmist, seems to be crying out, in frustration. His patience has run out, as he waits for God, to come to his rescue. Now that's what songs of lament are.

Songs of lament are needed, and they are proper. I want to repeat that. Songs of lament are needed, and they are proper, in the church. When church is reduced, to a spiritual pep rally, every Sunday, and that's all you get.

Just, woo-ha, yay, every Sunday. That's my idea of a pep rally. When songs, when church is only reduced, to just that, when our songs, is always in major keys, and never in minor keys, then we deny the reality, of a fallen world, that we live in.

in which suffering, heartbreak, betrayal, injustice, are inescapable, experiences of our life. David, gives us a better way.

He shows us, that there are moments, to sing in major keys, but are very, there's also very, many times, moments, to sing, in minor keys. David, facing this reality, of life, of heartbreak, betrayal, and injustice, goes to God, with his anguish.

[6:04] He goes to God, with his questions. How long, oh Lord, will you forget me forever? How long, will you hide, your face, from me?

How long, must I take counsel, in my soul, and have sorrow, in my heart, all the day? How long, shall my enemy, be exalted, over me? As one commentator, puts it, the words, how long, I know, if you notice, repeated four times, in just two verses, the words, how long, are a question, where hope, and despair, pursue each other, in close circle.

There's hope, even in that question. Hope, because David, brings his cry to God, who alone, can rescue, and deliver, and he knows this. Which is why, perhaps, the despair, is also so acute, for David.

Because David, knowing, and trusting, in God's power, to save, is at a loss, at the seeming, silence of God, in the midst, of his woes.

How long, oh Lord? Can you relate, to David, this morning? Have you experienced, a sense, of divine, abandonment?

[7:29] When, you know, God is there, you know, the God you love, and you trust, and you've entrusted, your life to, you know, the truths, of scripture, yet, your experiences, it feels, that God is far, far away.

It seems, that God has forgotten you. It seems, that God has forsaken you. Can you relate, to David, in the midst, of depression? Can you relate, relate to David, in the midst, of unsuccessful, successful plans?

You've made plans, you've made sacrifices, and all your hopes, have been dashed. Can you relate, with David, when opposition, is all around you?

Enemies, all around. When the difficulty, is so great, and the storm, swirls around you, and threatens, to bring you under, into the abyss, words fail.

Maybe you cannot, find the words, in those moments, or maybe it's that, you've used all the words up, that you have. But in such moments, psalms of lament, are appropriate.

[8:57] And as God's people, we need to go to them. I've often, counseled, many people, when they come to me, in the midst of sorrows. One of the, places in the Bible, I ask them to go to, is to go to the psalms.

When you don't have words, just read the psalms. Read it. Meditate on it. Soak yourself in it. But note, that songs of lament, are sung, by the faithful.

These are not songs, for everybody. These are songs, for the faithful. For God's people. The faithful, like David, who despite the pain, and earth, and injustice, they've experienced, their faith, and hope, is still firmly, placed in God.

Their songs, may be in a minor key, but it is still sung, to God. Because David knows, that his God, can handle his pain.

He knows, that his God, can handle his anger. He knows, that his anguish, and even in his despair, God is there.

[10:17] And God can deal with it. And so, he can go to God, with all of himself. He doesn't have to hide. Only come to God, when he's feeling happy. Only come to God, when he has to like, pretend, that he's joyous, and happy, and full of, verve.

And, he can come to God, in the midst of his despair. You know, we also have to acknowledge, we're often prone, to leave God.

We're prone, to leave God, when things get rough. And that is the way, of the idolater. People, who already, deconstruct their faith, at signs of trouble, or doubt, or question God.

And in the midst, of that doubt, and question, they desert God. And to desert, they leave the God, who sought them out, who loved them, who saved them.

That is the way, of an idolater. The way, of the faithful, is this. It's to bring, your doubts, because you do, we, we, doubt, and questioning, are realities of life, in the midst, of a broken world.

[11 : 36] And so, the way of the faithful, is to bring those doubts, and those questions, to God.

Trusting, that he sees you, and he's able to love you, through it.

And if you learn anything, from this psalm, this morning, let it be these, let it be this. God is patient. God is patient enough.

God is loving enough. God is big enough, for you to bring, your whole self, to him. He is your loving father.

He can take your joy, as well as your pain. So go to him, with your questions, in prayer. Go to him. And that's what, David does in this psalm.

He cries out to God, in the first two verses, in the midst, from the wallows, of his pain, and anguish, and frustration even. He cries out, God, where are you God?

[12 : 41] How long? And then in the middle verses, three and four, he makes an appeal, to his God. He tells God, of his fears. He is honest, with his God.

Consider and answer me, David says, O Lord, my God. Light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest my enemies say, I have prevailed over him.

Lest my foes rejoice, because I am shaken. There is true honesty, before God, from David. In the middle of his great need, he comes to God, in prayer, making his appeal to God, being honest, not hiding, his face, from his Lord.

There is a childlike, honesty, in this. You know, there is a certain age, as a parent, when you start to notice, your children, begin to have a sense, of an interior life.

When, what I mean by that, is that when they, keep things from you, when they don't tell you, everything. When it feels like, you have to pry, things out of them. And that is not, altogether bad, actually.

[13 : 50] It is part of growing up. Developing an interior life. As an adult, you long for those early days, though, when your child, came to you, when they are at a certain age, and, and, and, whatever they're feeling, whatever it is, they unload it on you, they tell you, and, and they trust you, to deal with it.

And get their boo-boos kissed. And as soon as you do it, it's like, everything is, it's, it's perfect. I have four boys, two of them are out of that stage. Two are still in there.

And I cherish those moments. When they think, there is no trouble, that, their papa, their mama, can't make go away. That's the childlike honesty.

Of course, that's not true, is it? At least, from human standpoint, you are limited, as a parent. You are finite. You're weak.

You have troubles of your own, you can't solve. And as they grow older, and they realize that, as they began to see the consequences, of sin in the world, the brokenness in you, and in themselves, and in the world around them, they start to realize, there are some troubles, that I can't just run to papa, to kiss away.

[15 : 19] So when that happens, what, or whom do you point them to? Well, the question is, to whom do you go, when faced with the brokenness, and pain in your life, and in the world around you?

David, gives us an example, of childlike honesty here, because he knows, that God is not finite, God is not limited, God is not weak, and he can go to God, with that childlike honesty, bear his soul, to his Lord.

Consider and answer me, David says, Oh Lord, he recognizes who he is speaking to, Oh Lord, it's the covenant name of God, Oh Lord, and then he personalized it, My God, this is someone, who has a relationship, with God, this isn't a stranger, this is someone, who knows his God, who is known by his God, and he comes, as a child, to a father, not a slave, to a master, and he says, consider and answer me, Oh Lord, my God, light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, it's in the midst, of this sorrow, and he says, I need help, God, light up my eyes, I'm at the point of death, I'm wallowing in pain, and sorrow, in despair, and depression, save me, before I fall into the abyss,

and he knows his God, he knows that his God loves him, and he says, lest my enemies say, I have prevailed over him, and why is that important, to say to God, because I am, I belong to you, God, I am yours, what will they say, when they boast, that it prevailed, over your own, your name, God, is on the line here, your honor, is on the line here, I belong to you, you must deliver me, again, this is a cry of the faithful, this can only be said, by someone who knows God, who has a relationship with God, this can only be said, by a child, to his father, lest my enemies say, I have prevailed over him, lest my foes rejoice, because I am shaken, and so he comes to God, with this invocation, and in it, is also the petition, a cry, and supplication, of his heart to God, and what are the motivations, that leads him to say this, it is because, he knows his God, he knows God's honor, is on the line, he knows to whom he belongs, and so he says, lest, these people boast, lest, I am destroyed, lest my foes rejoice, because I am shaken, you wouldn't want that, God, so come to my hate, so we see, in these first four verses, honesty, in the midst of despair, but lastly, we see, that David, at the end of it, all, in the midst, still in the midst, of his pain, he was able to, entrust himself, his whole self, to God, to verse five and six, but, that but, there, is doing a lot of work, but, in the midst of all, I've just said, in the midst of, seeming that God, is so far away, and he's forsaken, and forgotten me, in the midst, of my pain, and my enemies, laughing at me, but, [19:36] I have trusted, in your steadfast love, my heart, shall rejoice, in your salvation, I will sing, to the Lord, because he is, dealt bountifully, with me, David shows us, the path, of true wisdom, in the midst, of pain, in these last, two verses, verse five, he shows, his stubborn, trust in God, I have trusted, in your steadfast love, he says, and that's, isn't that the, the beckoning call, of God, in the wisdom literature, Proverbs three, five to six, says this, trust in the Lord, with all your heart, and do not lean, on your own understanding, in all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make, straight, your path, that's what David, is doing here, in the midst, of his pain, when enemies, are all around, it's so easy, to say, well, let me lean, on my own understanding,

I don't see him, seems like he's, forgotten me, let me find, another way, let me look, to the world, but that, David is not doing that, it's a stubborn, trust in God, I have trusted, he says, in your steadfast love, but that's the key thing, David can trust, because he knows, of the steadfast love, of God, he's experienced it, he knows it, he remembers it, he has experienced it, he knows it, and he remembers it, that's often, where we fall, we, who are God's own, have experienced, his love, we know it, but often times, we forget, we fail to remember, that is the, that is the, that is the fault line, of Israel, in the history, it is the fault line, of God's people, often, is we forget, to remember, the faithfulness, of our God, his steadfast love, for us, but David, doesn't, he trusts it, he remembers, I have trusted, in your steadfast love, and, what happens then, because he is trusted, in steadfast love, he can say, my heart shall rejoice, in your salvation, my heart, shall rejoice, and, many times, people have thought, when they look at this psalm, well, maybe some times have, passed, between the first four verses, and the last two verses, years have passed, God has delivered him, and now he comes back, and he writes, the last two verses, that's not true, David is writing, still in the midst, of his pain, he knows, of the God, whom he is crying to, and he knows, that salvation, belongs to the Lord, alone, and so he can cry, even from the depth, of pain, he says, I know, my God, I know, of his great salvation, I rejoice in it, because of his steadfast love, he would not leave me, he is with me, so he trusts God stubbornly, and he trusts God joyfully, you can almost see, that last verse, as if there's a key change, musicians will say, a transposition, am I right in saying that, like you know, right, so there's a key change, it's been in the minor key, all along, but in verse six, in this case, it's like a movement, from the minor, to the major key, the song of lament, ends in a joyful key, as the psalmist, expresses his trust, and joy in the Lord, and he says,

I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt, bountifully with me, Psalm 34 says this, I will bless the Lord, at all times, his praise, shall continually, be in my mouth, that's what David, is doing here, even in the midst, of pain, and sorrow, and depression, the praise of his God, is still in his mouth, and he will sing, to the Lord, because he knows, the Lord has dealt, bountifully with him, is he crazy, as all reality, left him, he says, the Lord has dealt, bountifully with me, in the midst, of his pain, and sorrow, it's because, David is aware, of God's abiding, and steadfast love, which allows him, then to praise God, even in the midst, of his pain, his faith in God, is not an abstract, idea of God, his faith in God, is not in a God, who is distant, but it is in a God, who has made himself, near to him, who has brought him, out of his despair, in the past, who has raised him up, David had a relationship, with this faithful God, and so he can say, this, in verse 6, I think we're all agreed, that the world is broken, the world is full of pain, and anguish, the consequences, of this

broken world, touches all of us, many come, every Sunday, some are dealing, with serious heartache, and we all have it, in different moments, of our life, that's why God, has brought us, into a family, this family of God, and so may I encourage you, people of God, when you come, to God's presence, when you gather, among his people, please, don't pretend, come, as you are, with your whole self, be honest, with God, and be honest, with your brothers, and sisters, go to God, cry out, in prayer, in desperation, in frustration, but cry out to God, and come, come to him, those are not the moments, where you should stay home, from church, those are the very moments, you should be present, with God's people, in God's presence, to hear his word, of life, to partake, of the promises, that he's made to you, in the sacrament, to come near, to draw near to him, those are the moments, the devil will have you, comparing your life, with others, the devil will have you, saying, you should stay away, he does that, so he may sow, the seed of discontent, and the seed of distrust, and that's his MO, he did it with our first parents,

[26 : 51] Adam and Eve, he hasn't changed, recognize, that he's a liar, and come, hear God's truth, about you, concerning you, concerning his steadfast love to you, and that's the antidote, isn't it, the antidote, is to fix our eyes, on God, to remember, his steadfast love for us, to remember, that he has brought us out, we were dead in sin, without God in the world, he has brought us out, into a saving relationship, through the death, of his own son, he has brought us out, and by faith in Jesus Christ, you have been adopted, into God's family, you've been given an inheritance, as Peter says, in his epistle, you've been given an inheritance, that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you, no matter what happens, in this world, you've been given an inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you, that nothing in this broken world, can take away, not even death, what's more, what's more,

Jesus, sang the songs of lament, the psalms, are the song book, of Jesus himself, our Lord, he grew up, singing these songs, and he sang, the songs of lament, the psalms, you know, the prophet Isaiah, says about Jesus, he is the man of sorrows, which makes me think, that he sang, the minor keys, even more, than he sang, the major keys, Jesus, is your high priest, as the author of Hebrews said, he, is your high priest, and you do not have a high priest, who is unable, to sympathize, with your weaknesses, for you have one, who has been tempted, in every way, just as you were, are, yet, he did not sin, and if that is true, about your high priest, if he is intimately aware, of the pain, that you feel, the reality, the consequences, of the broken world,

Jesus is aware of that, he faced betrayal, and rejection, he faced the ultimate rejection, for your sake, for my sake, you do not have a high priest, who is not able, to sympathize, empathize, with your weaknesses, so if that is true, then let us then, approach God's throne of grace, with confidence, in the midst of your pain, approach, his throne of grace, with confidence, so that you may receive mercy, and find grace, to help you, in your time of need, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Amen.