

The Lord, Our Power and Provider

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[0:00] We're in Psalm 71 this morning and we'll be starting from verse 9 and going to verse 20.

! It's on page 572 in your pew Bible. Page 572. You know, the Psalms are wonderful. I think we take them for granted.

Too much. But there should be essential daily reading for every Christian. In it, in the Psalms, we see and we learn how to cry out to God.

From every imaginable life situation we might find ourselves. It helps if we see the Psalms. This will help us if we see the Psalms as authorized responses to God.

Rather than just a random and mixed response of human beings. What do I mean by authorized response?

[1:08] If the Psalm is indeed God's Word, it's part of the Holy Scripture, we have to believe, if we believe as Anglicans in the inherency of Holy Scriptures, we have to take even the words of the Psalms as authorized. That is, imprinted by God as worthy responses to God.

Which means then, if we see it that way, we need to learn them. We need to learn the Psalms. We need to pray them to God. If you've ever read through the different sections of the Psalms, you'll know there are challenges to reading and praying the Psalms.

There are parts that are full of joy and gratitude. And there are also bits in it that are full of anguish. On the verge of despair, even.

The Psalmist seems. There are parts in the Psalms where the Psalmist is questioning God's presence. And even questioning God's care. But all of the Psalms, all of the Psalms, even through these different human emotions, are undeniably a book of rock-solid dependence on God.

Even the parts where there seems to be utter despair, the Psalmist comes back to solid confession in who God is.

[2:30] One of the overarching themes through all of the Psalms is you see that this is a book of someone who knows his or her God.

And is committed and has full confidence in his or her God. This is one of the things that the Psalm, this is why the Psalm is good for us.

It's also good because we see in the Psalms, this is a book that doesn't sort of gloss over the things that affect us and afflict us as human beings.

It doesn't gloss over any of the human life situations that we go through. And no matter what you're going through, there's a Psalm for it. You can find it in the Psalms.

And that's why the Psalms are so beautiful. Because we see God's Word itself applicable to our situation. If we believe, as I said before, that all Scripture is useful for teaching, as 2 Timothy 3.16 tells us, I think the Psalms, even more especially, are very useful because they are very practical.

[3:42] That's one of the usefulness of the Psalms. I believe this about all of Scripture. It's really all of Scripture is useful. But the Psalms especially are very practical for our everyday lives.

So this is, we're only going to be talking about Psalm 71 today, but this is a plea for the Psalms. The Psalms are important for us. Read them. Be in the habit of reading them continually.

Meditating on them. Even if you have a reading plan. I would suggest that you supplement that.

Whatever book of the Bible you read, just read one Psalm.

Maybe in the beginning or maybe at the end of your Scripture reading. It's a good practice. And then pray those Psalms as well as you read them. It is a dynamic, dynamic means by which God has given to us to talk to Him.

But our Psalm today, Psalm 71, is one of these Psalms that doesn't have a heading. We don't know where it comes from really. There are suggestions.

[4:44] It's not really a Psalm of David. Most of the Psalms of David has that heading that will tell us this. But it very well could be a Psalm of David. Some people have said it is a Psalm of David. And David wrote it when he was fleeing from Absalom, his son.

When Absalom was taking most of Israel. And the king himself, David, is now a fugitive in his own land. In his own country. And he's running. Some people have alleged that David wrote this Psalm during that time.

Others have said this is a Psalm by the prophet Jeremiah. This is what's also important about the Psalm as you read them. It's not just all of it, as you know. It's not all written by David. In fact, it's not even all written at the same time.

It is God's hymn book for His people. It's meant to be. And some of the Psalms are written around David's time. Some of them are written during them leaving Egypt in the wilderness.

Some of them are written after the exile or post-exile or pre-exile. So some have alleged that this Psalm was written by Jeremiah, the prophet. And you know Jeremiah was called a weeping prophet.

[5:53] And he went through hard-reduous times. So you can see maybe why this might be indeed a Psalm that he wrote. We're not told. But one of the things that's unique about this Psalm, it encompasses what we said before.

There are moments of despair. There are moments of confidence in God. And ultimately ends in this, you know whoever wrote this Psalm knows his God.

And is confident that his God is trustworthy. So let's look into it. And we'll start in verse 9 really. Because it's, that's, the Psalms begins, Do not cast me away in the time of old age when my strength fails.

Do not abandon me. For my enemies talk concerning me. And those who watch for my life conspire together. Saying, as God has abandoned him.

Pursue. As God has abandoned him. Pursue and seize him. Because there is no deliverer. Oh God. Be not far from me.

[7:06] Oh my God. Make haste to help me. This is, the Psalm starts, I mean, at least this passage.

The whole Psalm starts first by acknowledging God who is the rescuer. If you look back in the beginning of it. That acknowledge that it is only in Yahweh that you can take refuge. That Yahweh is a rock.

That you can rest in and resort to. And it talks about how even Yahweh has known him since his youth. On all of those things. But verse 9 says to, And it ends it, That his mouth is filled with praise for this God.

And praising God's glory all day. But then verse 9 takes a departure. He is beseeching, crying out to God. That in his old age, He is talking about his youth, And his confidence, And relationship with God.

And he seems to be, In his old age, When my strength fails, Do not abandon me, God. Right? This is, The Psalmist here, Recognizes his own frailty.

[8:18] His own weakness. Can you identify with him? Right? Right? You don't have to be in old age to identify with him really here. You can identify with the fact that there are moments in our lives when our strength fails us.

Our knowledge fails us. Our preparation fails us. And this is, The Psalmist crying out to God here. And it's, It's one of the hardest taunts for believers to face.

It's the taunt that, God is not here for you to help you. To face, As in your distress, To hear that God has forsaken you. It's a, It's a taunt for those who are, Who are believers in Christ.

And we're not, That's not a taunt that only comes at us. He came to our Lord himself. On the cross. They taunted him. Where is your God? Where is the one who you put your trust and faith in?

And so, If our Lord and Savior will be taunted with that taunt, We should expect, As people of God, That the devil will come. That the world will come with the same taunt. Where is your God?

[9:26] In whom you depend on. So we should expect it. And this, And our cry should be the cry of the Psalmist. We should, In humility, In total trust, Say, God, Do not abandon me.

Even in the face of this taunt. Be not far from me. Come quickly, Oh my God, To help me. It's an echo of most of the other Psalms. You see this refrain throughout the Psalms.

Do not abandon me, God. Come quickly. Be my helper. Come to my head. It is a, It is a cry for help in the time of distress. And it's a reminder, As we pray it, That others have gone through the same travail.

That we might be going through. That's one of the things that's unique and important about the Psalms. As you read them, You're aware that, I am not alone in this. My situation might be different, But it's not unique.

As you go through the Psalms. It reminds you of that. And look here, In the end of verse 12. He's crying out to Yahweh. But he acknowledges, Oh God, Be not far from me.

[10 : 35] But then he says, Oh my God, Make haste to help me. The second clause there, Identifies, That God is his God.

He recognizes, There's a relationship with this God, That he's crying out to. He's not crying out, Like we've just been going through the book of Jonah. And we've just finished the book of Jonah, On Wednesday, Remember when, The ship was about to, The storm was there, The ship was about to break.

All the sailors were crying out to God. They're gods, Little G. And then they finally came, The captain went and got Jonah, And says, Who are you, And what do you believe, And who do you believe in?

And he says, I believe in the God, The one who made the heavens and the earth, And the seas. And they cried out to that God too. They cried out to the true God, Yahweh. But they were crying to God as strangers.

People who don't have relations with God. God in his mercy hurt them. But this is not that kind of cry. This is a cry of someone who knows God. Who has an abiding relationship with God.

[11 : 40] This is a cry of the faithful. And he goes on in verse 13. We don't know the situation of the psalmist. We don't know what he's been facing. But he's under distress and under duress.

And he's being taunted by the enemy. Where is his God? Who's going to save him now? Who's going to help him now? And he prays in verse 13, May my accusers be put to shame and consumed.

With scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. Now verse 13 is a difficult prayer to pray as God's people. It's difficult. But if we believe the psalms are indeed authorized prayer responses to God, we can be bold to pray them.

Verse 13 will be one of those psalms that's called the indignant, imprecatory psalms. The whole psalm is not imprecatory. Verse 13 is an imprecatory verse. It's asking for God's judgment.

But how can we, human beings, pray this same prayer boldly? You might ask. How can we say, like the psalmist here, May my accusers perish in shame.

[12 : 50] May those who want to harm me be covered in scorn and disgrace. This is a cry. We can do it because it's a cry for God to vindicate us. Us.

We can do it because we're crying for God's divine judgment. We're crying for God to be the vindicator. Look at the difference here. The psalmist is crying, God, vindicate me in the face of all these people.

Show yourself mighty and strong to save. We're not taking the judgment into our own eyes. The psalmist is not taking the judgment. He's crying out to God to judge and to vindicate. There's a key difference there.

That's a key thing. The psalms are, even the imprecatory psalms that we sometimes may find it hard to say, is all of it as a cry of dependence on God's justice.

We're depending on God's justice. It's no different than the way our Lord teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. When we say, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

[13 : 53] Every time we say that, we are praying for God's final judgment. Every time we say, may your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. We are acknowledging that God is the judge.

And if his kingdom will come on earth. And when it does come, finally, their judgment attends it. And there's that final judgment. And the Lord himself will be the judge of every soul.

Right? And every time we pray it, we are dependent on Christ. Our Lord. He is the Lamb of God. We will come and judge every soul. We're also dependent, humbly, in the fact that we cannot judge. We are not in a place to judge. We may cry for God's vindication. We may cry that God will vindicate us. Our Lord himself cries that God will judge and vindicate him.

Right? And his resurrection was that vindication. When we cry for God to vindicate us, we're praying for our resurrection. Not unlike our Lord Jesus Christ. You know?

[14:58] When he comes and resurrected this fallen human body and gives us his righteous, glorious body. That's the cry of our soul. But we're acknowledging that it is God who vindicates.

I'm stressing that point because we ought to have a bit of humility not to take up God's judgment. Not to put ourselves in the seat as the judge of other people's soul.

If we were to do that, look in the Bible. Who would you have condemned? Who would you have... If you just look, you know, look at someone like David.

If we were the judge of human souls, David, we would have condemned. Right? For God, the merciful God, knows David's heart.

Rescue David. Right? We would have condemned Peter. We would have condemned Saul. Who was later Paul. Right? He was a terrorist.

[16:00] Right? I mean, it's not far to say that before his conversion, Saul of Tarsus was what we would have called in our day a religious fanatic terrorist who was going out to kill people because on the basis of their faith.

Right? We would have condemned him. But God, that's the kind of people God saves and redeems. So we cannot be the one to judge people's souls. We might have... We might have not... We wouldn't have condemned Judas Iscariot. I don't think. Because he was in the party. He was the treasurer of all people. We didn't know that he was going to...

You know, when you see him, you will say, well, this is an outstanding person. So we... There's a level of humility there as we... Even as we pray for God's vindication to say it in the way that Christ would say it.

Recognize it. In fact, when we do, we recognize ourselves that left to God's mercy and grace, we ourselves cannot stand before God's judgment. So it's out of an overwhelming abundance of God's mercy towards us that we pray that prayer with humility.

[17:15] So... But we pray nevertheless because when we do pray it, we're asking for God's justice to come. We are saying that we hate sin and we hate the evil in our world.

But the psalmist continues from verse 14 to 18. It says, This is the psalmist saying.

Look at the context here. He's being taunted. He's being assailed. And he's asking God to help him. But he's also professing confidence in God.

I will hope continually and we praise you. Yet more and more. His circumstances doesn't doesn't belie the fact that he should be saying these words, but he knows his God.

I will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. He looks in his past as, I can't even recount in the past God's faithfulness.

[18:29] He's thinking of his past, perhaps, but not just his past, but his nation's past. God's faithfulness to Israel. For us as believers, we stand in the same shoes as the psalmist.

Even in the midst of our travels, and when people are questioning, people are persecuting us, as the church of Christ, we can say, with the psalmist, I can't even recount.

My mouth will tell of your righteousness, for their number is past my knowledge. Because we can look back to our lives. We can look back to the church, triumphant, the church in the past, and see God, this same God, has never failed us.

He is faithful to keep his own. That's the confession the psalmist is making here. He's saying, with the mighty deeds of the Lord, I will come. I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. So as the people taunt him, as they say, where is his God? He's saying, I know where my God is, and I will remind you of his righteousness. I will come.

[19:34] I will retail his mighty deeds. There's a level of faith and confidence in God here. An awareness. Remember, we say, this is someone who has a relationship with God.

And he hasn't forgotten God's character and God's nature. He remembers even, verse 17, that from my youth, you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

Verse 17, so even, as I have, if you have taught me from my youth, even now in my old age and gray hairs, oh God, do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to another generation.

Your power to all those to come. What happens when we're faithfully proclaiming God's goodness? Even in the midst, when circumstances may say that we shouldn't.

When we look to Christ, not to our circumstances, this is what happens. We are witnesses of God's great salvation. We are proclaiming to the world around us the God in whom we trust. [20:43] Because they look at us and say, well, why are those people praising God? Why do you come to church this morning? Even when most of the seats are empty and bare and it might be discouraging.

Why do you come? Why do you come? It's because you know the God you serve. You are proclaiming His mighty deeds. The Lord who has been with you from your youth is the same God to whom you trust even now.

It's not depending on circumstances. Brothers and sisters in Christ, if we depend on circumstances in order to praise God, we will never praise God. We will never cry out His praises and His worth to the world around us.

because the world will beat us down. Satan will tell us of our weakness. He will remind us of our sins. But when we look beyond all of those things and we look at God's faithfulness, His mighty deeds, what are His mighty deeds in your life?

He is that God who brought you from death, from the miry clay and raised you up that you are now seated, even as you are now, but you are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, Paul tells us in Ephesians.

[21:54] the God who has done that to you and I, that's the God to whom we pray. That's the God to whom we praise. We raise our voice and praise. That is a prayer that is not dependent on our circumstances.

That's a prayer that looks beyond wherever we are now, today, or tomorrow, to see the promises of God for us. That's what we need to learn from the psalm in this prayer.

He professes that rock-solid confidence in God. The contrast is there. The enemies are assailing Him. The world is besieging Him.

He's under duress and He's crying out. He knows where His hope lies. And He says in verse 17, in verse 19 to 20, Your righteousness, O God, riches the heavens.

You have done great things, O God, who is like You. You will have made me see many troubles and calamities. He's not, He's not oblivious to the sorrows and the trouble of life.

[23:08] He recognizes it. But He says, You will revive me again in verse 20. You've made me see many troubles and calamities. You will revive me again. From the depths of the earth, You will bring me up again.

This is one of the things that's important as we read the Psalms. I talked about why it's important.

There's another thing that's important as we read it is we ought to read it.

We don't just attribute the words of the Psalms to ourselves, but we have to do it in Christ. What do I mean by that? We are in Christ. That's what we know.

That's what it means to being a Christian. We are in Christ. But as we do, as we read the Psalms, all the Psalms are spoken by our Lord Himself.

I don't mean that He spoke every single verse, but they speak of Him. Can you identify in verse 20 here our Lord Jesus Christ? They tell about Him preeminently.

[24:09] That's what I mean by the Psalms are about our Lord. Here, the very words is as if Christ is saying it. You have made me see many troubles and calamities.

You will revive me again. From the depths of the earth, you will bring me up again. What does that remind you of when it comes to our Lord Jesus Christ?

Died, buried, and on the third day risen again. Raised up by God. He was vindicated. So, as we read the Psalms, this is why it's so comforting, especially as we read the Psalms as Christians because we read it as in Christ.

The God who vindicated our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Raised Him. Revived Him from death. Raised Him up again. He is the only true righteous one, mind you.

Right? As we read the Psalms, we recognize our sins, we recognize our fallenness, but when we're in Christ, we're covered with His righteousness. So, we can also lay claim to God's hate and hope and help even though we are guilty.

[25:24] We know that in and of ourselves. Even though we are sinful in and of ourselves. We come as we read the Psalms which says, I stand in Christ's righteousness and I call upon the God and Savior of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is Him who I pray to, it is Him I call upon and I have a rock solid confidence that He will revive me again. That from the depths of the earth He will bring me up again.

That is our confidence because our Lord and Savior has gone before us. He's the first fruit. He's our elder brother. And we've seen this God's faithfulness to Him.

And if you are in Christ, this is your confidence. This is really important. I want to stress it again, brothers and sisters. Your confidence lies in the fact that you are in Christ.

Your confidence, even as you read God's word in this Psalms, lies in the fact that you have been redeemed. This is why it's important to have a relationship. This is why the Psalm is here.

[26 : 30] The words He's saying will be meaningless if He doesn't know the God whom He's talking about. He doesn't have a relation with His God. But because He does, He can say these things about His God.

You can make these claims about His God. This is why if you're here today you don't have a relation with His God, He wants that relationship with you.

And if you do, brothers and sisters, I think there are things in the world that, like the Psalmist here, that the world turns us, the world tells us where is your God?

where is the God you serve? When you pray for healing and there is none to be found. When you pray for safety and you feel like we're under duress.

When you pray for justice in the world and the wicked continually prosper. And the wicked are taunting because you see their lives and it seems like they're living in a lapse of luxury.

[27 : 30] Well, they're not, but it seems like it. It seems like they are the ones that are enjoying life. And you, because you're righteous and you're godly and you want to be faithful to God, it seems like your life is shriveling day by day, minute by minute.

And the devil even comes and taunts you. How is that Christianity thing going? How is it going? And, but you know the God you serve.

You know who your vindicator is. You're not looking at the circumstances. You're looking at your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You're looking at his deliverance.

You remind yourself of his deliverance in the past and you, you're standing on the rock and depending on his final deliverance of you and of his church at the last day.

This is our confidence. This is our hope. This is why we can pray in that words, in the words of even the dragon song that we just sang.

[28 : 36] Pray. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him. How I've proved him. Have you proved him over and over? Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus.

Oh, for grace to trust him more. This is our prayer. He's proven himself to us over and over and we also come to him saying, God, give me more grace to even trust you more in the face of, of, of all that might come my way.

May God grant us the grace. May God give us continually the faith and the boldness to trust him.

Let us pray. Lord God, Heavenly Father, we thank you for this word, this psalm, this morning.

It is, it is like balm to our soul in some ways. even this, as we are, even in this season of life, it seems like we, there are things in the world that are, that are taunting us, asking us where our God is.

There are circumstances we might be facing, difficult circumstances, where the devil might want to question, make us question your presence. But thank you, Lord, that you are our Lord.

[29 : 54] You are covenant God. You are our Redeemer. And we trust you, Lord. Oh, give us grace to even trust you more. We pray this in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.