

Humans - Predator and Prey

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Date: 18 January 2004

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 18th of January 2004. The preacher is Paul Dudley. His sermon is entitled Humans, Predator and Prey and is based on Psalm 10.

You might like to open up your Bibles to Psalm 10 because that's what we're going to be looking at tonight. For those who were here last week, we looked at Psalm 9 and there we saw a great and mighty God, a God who is judge and king, a God who is all-powerful.

So in light of that, let's ask this great God to be working in our lives tonight as we hear from his word that he'll be changing us and shaping us into the people that he wants us to be. So why don't I pray for you and for me.

Father, we do indeed thank you that you are a great God, a God that listens to us, but also a God that enables us to live lives that bring honour and glory to you.

We pray that you open our ears and our hearts tonight. Father, that we'll come away tonight feeling encouraged and spurred on to live lives of the good works that you have prepared for us to do.

[1 : 1 9] We pray these things in your son's name. Amen. Well, school is about to start again in about another one and a half weeks' time. I remember those times of school.

Back in the early 80s was when I sort of started high school. I have many fond memories of being at school. One of them was running very fast. You see, I was bullied a lot at school.

And consequently, I learnt the art of running very fast and for a very long time. I worked out I wasn't the fastest person in my year, but if I had a good 10 metres on them, I could just keep on running at that speed and they wouldn't catch me.

They might catch me on that short distance, but if I just kept on running, it'd be okay. I've since thought about why I was bullied so much. I've worked out it was because of a couple of different reasons. One was I was the weed of the year.

Now, I don't know if you've ever looked at the photographs of your year. There's always standing up after the first row, there's always the shortest person standing on the very edge.

[2 : 2 3] Often, their face is cut in half because they actually don't fit on the whole picture. That was me. I was the runt of the year. Now, the way I've seen things happen is, you know, what ends up happening is if the biggest person is annoyed, they kick the next biggest person and then they kick the next biggest person, you keep on going until you get the cat kicked.

Well, I was the cat. I was the one that always got the, you know, if everyone else was annoyed, they'd go and kick me. The second reason I sort of figured out that I was bullied a lot was because my father taught at the school.

So anyone who was annoyed at my father, they really couldn't get at him. So, next best thing, get the son. I guess the third reason, you know, probably wasn't much of a reason. I guess I was a little bit cheeky as well.

Well, the bullying that occurred to me compares nothing to the oppression and the brutality that happens to many of the Christians in today's society.

Anelia and Paveen were 17 and 18 years old, respectively, in 1997. They were from Pakistan, from Muslim families.

[3 : 37] Anelia, she'd become a Christian and was very excited about her faith. 17 years old. She had a friend, Paveen, at school and she wanted to share this great love that she had for God.

So she gave Paveen a Bible and started teaching her a few Christian songs. Well, Paveen was very encouraged about these songs and started teaching her little sister and soon the family found out about this, this Muslim family in Pakistan.

And so they held out trying to work out where they were learning these things from because they were not happy about this. Well, Anelia invited Paveen to a Good Friday service.

Paveen came along and she was very excited about the message that she heard of Jesus and gave her life to him. Well, it wasn't long before the parents found out about this and they were furious.

They'd already arranged a marriage for her but Paveen had refused that and so Paveen ran away. She ran away from her family.

[4 : 47] Well, Anelia and her pastor, they were accused of kidnapping her and so they were taken. Anelia was first brought before her parents and whipped, beaten for nine hours non-stop in front of her parents.

Both of them, the pastor of the church who was caught and Anelia, were taken to prison where they were tortured in terrible ways. Though she was whipped 16 times.

It says in the article that after about nine times a man would faint. Well, after nine hours, after all this beating and after all these things, Paveen was found.

She was brought back to the family upon which her brother stabbed her to death to try and bring honour to the family. Paveen, for her faith, was killed.

A terrible death. Such opposition. Such persecution to the weak. It makes you want to cry out, why, O Lord, do you stand far off?

[6 : 06] Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Well, many of us have not actually faced this type of persecution or this level of brutality.

But many of us at different points, I guess, have faced opposition for our Christian faith. It may be from other family members. It may be from friends.

It may be even just the subtle pressure of our world telling us that we are foolish for our beliefs. But whatever those persecutions, however mild they may be, that come to us, they have a tendency to erode our confidence in God.

David knows about this having his confidence eroded. David was the one who has written both Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 and he has written both Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 to encourage both himself and those who read it.

those who face persecution, those who suffer brutality. He writes Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 companion Psalms.

[7 : 20] Psalms that are written together that were in some, even some of the early manuscripts are actually put down as one Psalm but here they are written down for us as two Psalms. David has written these Psalms that we may know how we can face this opposition.

Last week we saw in Psalm 9 the solution to our problem, the solution how we face this opposition, the solution is he celebrates in this great king, he celebrates in the kingship of Yahweh, that Yahweh is the great judging king, that nothing escapes his eyesight, that he is the great God, the champion for the weak.

There's the solution to the problem. We saw that last week in this great thanksgiving Psalm but this week we look at the problem, the problem of humans, the problem of the present evil wickedness that goes on and seemingly unhindered.

We look at a profile of what this wicked person looks like and as we've just heard from the Bible already what a horrid profile it is.

Is it any wonder that David starts the way that he does in the psalm? The way that he cries out to God, the way that he feels that in the midst of persecution a sense of isolation.

[8 : 43] A crying out in the dark but no one hearing. Like being in a cave right at the very back lost with no light calling out for someone to help you but no one listening.

No one caring. Why oh Lord do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? What does David want?

In the arrogance the wicked persecute the poor. Let them be caught in the schemes they have devised. David wants them to be held accountable for the things that they have done.

Well in verses 2 through to 6 which is this first section we're going to have a look at David gives this profile of the wicked. I don't know if you've seen some of these profiler shows I quite enjoy them. A profiler is someone who sort of works out what the profile according to the different clues that he's got of what the person is like.

The average height weight what they might do what they might look like those type of things. A profiler works out from the available evidence what this person is.

[9 : 51] Well David here gives us a profile of the wicked person. the one who oppresses those the weak. We see there the way that he describes them.

He describes them as arrogant those who are full of pride. They consider themselves a law unto themselves in their arrogance in the vastness of their own mind.

They consider themselves above the law. They can do whatever they want when they want and how they want. They are the ones who set the agenda not the law not any god not anything else.

They are law unto themselves. And in light of that they can hurt the weak. They can hurt whoever they want. They can do whatever they want. They can take whatever they want.

they are on about satisfying the lust of their heart. Whatever delights them they will boast in that they have it no matter what the cost.

[10 : 57] For them they have no use of God. God is something to be scorned at. God is something that has no use for them. He has nothing that they can add to their own lives.

So confident are they in their own abilities. So lulled into a sense of security of their outward success. This is the profile of the wicked.

They have no use for God. Yet David also notices that they are prosperous. They seem to get away with all that they want.

they seem to succeed. In the wicked's mind David says basically they think that God is ineffective.

That God can do nothing to them. They can breach his laws and they conclude that there is nothing that can move them.

[12 : 01] Throughout all generations nothing will be able to shake them. They are like a vast structure a huge great ship nothing can sink them nothing at all.

They boast about it. Look there in verses 2 through to 6 In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor. Let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.

For the wicked boast of the desires of their heart. Those greedy for gain curse and renounce the Lord. In the pride of their countenance the wicked say God will not seek it out.

All their thoughts are there is no God. Their ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high out of their sight.

As for their foes they scoff at them. They think in their heart we shall not be moved. Throughout all generations we shall not meet adversity.

[13 : 03] From this great foundation in their own minds from this great platform of utter security David goes on to talk about more of their deeds.

It tells us more about their conduct a violent conduct. Look at their violent conduct of their speech in verse 7. their mouths are filled with cursing and deceit and oppression.

Under their tongues are mischief and iniquity. Here we see that one of their chief weapons is the tongue. This tongue that can cause just a small spark that can light a bush fire.

A tongue that can cause so much damage. In verses 8 to 9 we see that they're not only just violent in their speech but they're violent in their actions.

They're described here as an animal of prey. They sit in ambush in the villages. In hiding places they murder the innocent.

[14 : 11] Their eyes steadily watch for the helpless. They lurk in secret like a lion in its cover. They lurk that they may seize the poor. They seize the poor and drag them off in their net.

I enjoy watching documentaries. I enjoy just seeing the greatness of all the things that God has created. But there are times that I'm watching some of these documentaries, particularly ones on lions and tigers and great beasts of prey.

There are times that I wince just the brutality they can cause. Well, you see that pack of lions surround the zebras or the interlope.

The way that they stealthily come up towards their prey. The way they work together. The way they pick out the weakest ones and they tear after them, grabbing hold of them, and the lion grabbing its mouth around the neck to suffocate, to kill its prey.

And the way they savage the animal. There are times I have to look away. That's the picture that we have here of humans in their brutality towards others.

[15 : 35] The wicked, those who oppress, the weak. In verse 10, the victims there are completely crushed beneath their power.

They stoop, they crouch, and the helpless fall by their might. In verse 11, David concludes some of the things that are in their mind.

Their conclusion that they have about God, God has forgotten. They think in their heart, God has forgotten. He has hidden his face.

He will never see it. What a picture we have here. What a profile of the wicked. The wicked of David's day are very similar to the wicked of our day, aren't they?

The way that they prey upon the weak and vulnerable. people. We see it in so many different areas. We see it in so many different contexts with God's people being persecuted throughout the world.

[16 : 44] Is it any wonder that David cries out at the beginning, why do you stand off God? In verses 12 through to 15, David cries out again.

He cries out a plea for deliverance. This is his response. Rise up, O Lord. O God, lift up your hand. Do not forget the oppressed.

Rise up, God. Come and deliver. Come and do something about what is happening here. Be consistent with your righteous character. The picture we have here is of a raising hand, the symbol of engagement in battle.

Let the battle begin. God do something about the arrogant pride of those who oppress the poor. He calls on God not to forget the oppressed.

It's like Psalm 9 last week. Psalm 9, he recalls God as the one who will not forget the weak. He is the champion of the weak.

[17 : 54] He is the great king and judge. God does see. Well, as we have seen through today's psalm, the wicked claim that there is no God, that God has forgotten, that God couldn't be bothered with the wicked and they can do whatever they want.

But in verse 13, we see there that God, verse 14, that God does see. God does indeed take note of the trouble.

God is not blind.

He is not disinterested in what is happening in this world. He notes the things that are happening. He sees very clearly all that is happening in people's lives.

He will take things into account. He will take things into his hands and he will deal with them fairly and justly. He will bring about his righteous judgment. He does seek out the wicked.

[19 : 09] God seeks them out in verse 15.

Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoers. Seek out their wickedness until you find none. David cries out again, come and bring about justice.

Break their arm. Well, that seems like an odd statement. Why break their arm? Why not break two arms and a leg? Why not hit them on the head a little bit?

Why actually the right arm? In the Old Testament the arm was the picture of power. David is saying break their power, break their control that they have.

Well, God does not forget the oppressed. We saw that in Psalm 9. we see this in what David says here in these last few verses.

[20 : 11] He is the great king. He is the judge. He knows, he sees, and David can have full confidence in him. And because of this confidence, he finishes off this psalm the way that Psalm 9 started.

Looking at the great king, Yahweh as the eternal king. Look there in verse 16, the Lord is king forever and ever. The nation shall perish from his land.

And in 1718 he grows in confidence, he grows in assurance, he grows in peace of mind, knowing about this great king.

O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek, you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from the earth may strike terror no more.

God does hear, he does bring strength to those who trust in him. He will bring justice so that terror will strike no more on the land.

[21 : 22] But until that day of judgment, he strengthens those who are in the midst of trouble. He strengthens them and cares for them.

David looked for this great king to come. He speaks as though the king has already come and has already brought about his judgment, such is his confidence. But we have indeed seen this great king.

The New Testament speaks about this great king, a king who came from God's right hand, his only son, a king who came to earth to bring about his kingdom, brought with his price of his blood on a cross, a king who rose from the dead to be the first in his kingdom.

We have an eternal king, a king who we can trust in, Jesus. There are three points of application I guess for us from this psalm.

The first is that of humility. The wicked that we see throughout this world, both in David's time and now, one of their great traits is that of arrogant pride, a claim that there is no God, there is no need for God, that God does nothing for them.

[22 : 47] Well this loss of perspective is often seen I guess in two ways in our society. It's easy to condemn those who are very brash and vocal and dismissed, that there is no God, those atheists who say look there is no God, no God at all.

But there's also those who are functional atheists. Are you sure they affirm that there is a God, that he exists and oh look I rely on him as well.

But their actions do not show that. They live lives relying on themselves. Growing up through high school I thought I was invincible.

I could do anything. Give me a problem and I could get through it. I had no doubt even at that point that if I had cancer I could get through cancer not a problem. I was in control.

Give me a problem and I'll fix it for you. I could do anything. I remember even making huge great ramps thinking that on my push bike I could leap off these great ramps and fly through the air thinking that nothing would hurt me only to come crashing to the earth.

[23 : 57] It's very easy to carefully put up a facade around us. A facade that says that we are in control. But it's often the times where we come crashing down there are times where we will be forced to admit our powerlessness our inability to control even the smallest insignificant details of our life.

Through my life I'm coming to a greater appreciation of this. There is nothing outside of God's control. As humans many humans think that they can exercise control over their lives completely and utterly that they have no need for God.

These people will remain forever unable to stand in the awe of a great and majestic God. We need to be people of humility.

It's a scary thing to admit that you're not in control. A very, very scary thing. God's God's love. The second thing is to recognize our limitation as human beings, that we are people who do not have power to control the great things of life, even though we think we do.

In our contemporary society there are those atheists who denies the existence of God, but there are those who do think there is a God, but that he has no control, that God is not interested or has no influence in this world.

[25 : 45] Both these groups of people are people who think they are left to their own devices. They set their own goals. They devise their own morals. If there is no God, how are you going to work out how you should live?

They're left to themselves to devise their own morals, to fulfil their own desires, to create their own dreams, to meet their own needs. For these people, intelligence and ingenuity become the ultimate power, becomes the ultimate thing in their life.

This psalm has a very different viewpoint. The third thing from this psalm is, in light of our limitation, in light of us sitting humbly before our God, we are to be people who are people of responsibility, people who do not act as the wicked do, people who care for those who are weak and oppressed.

We are to be a people who care as God cares. I started at the beginning, talking about the fact that not many of us will face opposition persecution, compared to Anelia and Paveen.

Perhaps one day some of us may do, maybe even here in Australia, but whatever the persecution we face, whatever one that erodes our confidence in God, let us be reminded of Psalm 9 and Psalm 10, that there is indeed a great God who sees, who cares for us.

[27 : 28] He is the great judge and the great king. Let me pray. Father, we do indeed thank you for Psalm 9 and Psalm 10.

We pray that you help us to live lives in light of this, that we'll take on the great encouragement that David has written there for us, that despite seemingly though things are out of control, you're a God who sees, a God who takes note, a God who will bring about judgment.

We pray that we'll live lives of great confidence, trusting in you as our judge and king. Amen. Amen.