

Psalms of Ascent - Psalm 131

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[0 : 00] O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high, I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me, but I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Before I jump into this text and we work through this together as a body, I just wanted to remind us of a few things that are coming up in the church.

We have the chance to have a members meeting this Sunday, and so if you are a member here, we will be meeting after the service, we're going to tear down like you normally do, and then we'll have a little members meeting here the next Sunday, thank you, excuse me, not this Sunday, next Sunday, excuse me, all the members are like, Eric, really?

The next Sunday, so look forward to that, we're going to have a chance to give updates as a body and really hear from one another about how we're doing, care for one another, but also I wanted to just run this by us as well. We've been in contact with some of the leadership of the school here in this very building, and as you know, September's rolling around, and school's getting back in real quickly, and the teachers are going to be here in the last week of August, and so one of the things we get to do is we get to bless the people of the school, the teachers, the faculty, and that's something we want to do, to love those around us.

So we are going to be holding a teacher's catered lunch sometime in that last week, I'm still waiting on a date, but the reason I'm mentioning it to you is just already start thinking, is that something that maybe I could serve in?

[1 : 35] We don't have sign-ups yet, we're going to put those up hopefully next Sunday because we don't know the date, but we're looking for people to be able to serve with a kind heart and warmth, the teachers of the school, the faculty of the school, that we might bless them as they come back to teach the children here.

So two things coming up soon, I want to put those before us, but as we jump into the message now, I just want to relay to us a quote from a church father that has stuck with me throughout my entire life since I heard it.

It's a quote maybe you're familiar with, and it's this, Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. Now that's Augustine, Augustine, and when he wrote that thought down in a journal, someone found it at some point in time and said, this is really important for all Christians to hear.

I want to encourage us today that Psalm 131, as you've already seen in these three verses, is an expose of that idea. That as humans made in his image, who rebelled against him, destruction and death, anger and bitterness, suffering and brokenness is part of our experience.

And because that is the world in which we live, the reality is that we will be restless until we find our rest in God.

[3 : 08] And this psalm is for the one who feels that restlessness. This psalm is for the one who has tried every avenue to satisfy the demands that the soul yearns for.

To know peace, to know truth, to know happiness, and to not strive after the things of the earth. That is the posture that this psalm is written.

And so I want you to notice as we get into this, this psalm is written by King David. And the reason that's important is King David is arguably the greatest king that Israel produced.

Outside of Jesus, of course. And David was a man who knew what it was like to experience the restlessness that comes from living in this broken world.

And what he has to say here is so incredibly sweet. He's going to use an analogy about a baby or a young child and a mother.

[4 : 10] And that is his core idea, his core analogy, that I hope will speak to us this morning. So, what I want to do is I want to, again, we're going to read it one more time.

And then we're going to pull out the main ideas here. Psalm 131, a song of a sense of David. Oh Lord, my heart is not lifted up.

My eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.

Like a weaned child is my soul within me. Oh Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. In verse 1, we have a picture of something called pride.

Pride. And pride I'm going to define as the following. I know what's best for my life. And I'm competent enough to achieve it.

[5 : 14] Two things going on there. That the prideful heart says that I have established what is good and right in this world for me. that if I attain these things, I will have attained everything I could ever want.

And then the second part of that, and I have the ability to actually achieve that, which I'm defining as good. Pride is the heart posture where we make ourselves the hero of our own lives.

Whatever salvation, whatever goodness, whatever deliverance is that we decide it is, we can get ourselves to that place. That's what pride is. Now what is at the base of this worldview?

The base of this worldview is a godlessness. God is not needed. For I direct myself to what is right and I get myself to that location. Wherever right is, I can get myself there.

God is not needed to tell me what is right and God is not needed to get me there. And the reason why pride is important to define here is let's look at verse 1. What we see, the word pride is actually not used, but we have similar ideas that convey this idea.

[6 : 26] So here's verse 1. Oh Lord, my heart is not lifted up. And then again you have another expression. My eyes are not raised too high.

And these two expressions work together to give us a full picture of the prideful heart. And here's the prideful heart. Pride looks inward to ourselves, downward on others, but never upward to God. Notice, my heart is not lifted up. Now, David is speaking and saying, I have not given into pride, but the reverse of this, for those of us who do give into pride, who may experience what it's like to be a prideful person, we all can experience this, and David even himself experienced this.

Notice, my heart is not lifted up, which is an expression that says, my inner being, my thought, my intellect, my feeling, all of who I am contained in my heart, it's not lifted up.

But what if our heart is metaphorically lifted up? What does that mean? It means that we, ourselves, are elevated above other people, other worldviews, other ideas, to the point where the only place you can look when you lift yourself up is down.

[7 : 51] Which is why pride looks inward to ourselves and downward on others. And here's the following thought behind heart is not lifted up. My eyes are not raised too high. So I want you to imagine, there's a giraffe, and the giraffe is walking around the room.

Right here, there's a giraffe in this room. Probably hit their head right on this side. And that giraffe, it just walks around, we're all in amazement. Wow, look at that. It's just walking through here. The giraffe walks around the room, and everyone looks up to it.

Now, if the giraffe were to have a human mind, a human spirit, a human element to it, the only thing the giraffe could do is look down. And the image David is portraying is if you were to take your heart, your thoughts, your ideas, your sense of right or wrong, and you were to take it and place it above everyone else, every other person looks like a fool.

They look small. This is the picture David is painting. And he is saying, I have not done this. And he's not boasting. We know David.

He had a repentant heart and a heart to look to God for strength. David is saying here, Lord, by your grace, by your mercy, you have allowed me to not view others in a diminutive way.

[9 : 06] More importantly, you've not allowed me to trust in myself. But then the second part of this phrase, notice this. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

Pride looks inward to ourselves, downward on others, and then finally, never looks upward to God. But here's what David says, I have not occupied myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

And here's what he's saying with this phrase. It's kind of interesting. The great, wonderful things mentioned here refer to God's sovereign workings in the world. Now some people say, the works

here are what God has made.

Because the same terms are used throughout the Psalms to describe what God has made, the wonderful works of God. And that is an element of this. Possibly David is saying this, that I have not occupied myself in your place to say, I am like God and that I can create.

That's definitely a part of this. But there's something deeper going on here. The idea is, I have not occupied myself, my mind, my heart, everything you've given me, God, but I've not given it over to expending it on understanding all of the intricate workings of this universe.

[10:18] And here's why that's a beautiful thing. This is David's way of saying, it's futile to understand everything, to figure this world out. I can't sort all of the infinitude of things happening.

I can't sort all the crazy complexity of my life and all the things I see in this world. So here's what David's saying. I don't even try to work that all out. Instead, God, I've not occupied myself with figuring out all of that.

And instead, I'm looking to you. But verse one is teaching us something. What it's teaching us is that pride leads to death.

In Psalm 10, verse 4, it says, In the pride of his face, the wicked does not see him. All his thoughts are, there is no God.

The prideful heart believes that God does not exist and refuses to acknowledge him. And here's where the problem becomes. Because God opposes the proud.

[11:22] In Psalm 138, the Lord says this, Though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar. Haughty being a word for prideful or arrogant. And then in James, verse 4, we see the same idea.

God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And here's right off the bat what this psalm was about. Embracing humility as a means of life.

I don't know about you, but when I give way to my pride, when I believe that I have the answers, that I have the right way forward, something happens in my heart.

It becomes restless. Because I feel helpless to understand all the things in this world. I feel helpless to make my life to a point where it would be actually satisfying and my soul would be content.

I've tried. And maybe you're in your day and you've tried as well. I've tried to go down the path of success, to get the grade point average that I needed, to impress the boss at work, and to make a certain amount of money.

[12:26] I've tried all of these things to build accolades that I can look at and say, I did it. I accomplished all of these great things. And every time I've gone down that path, my heart remains restless.

And here's what this idea is in verse 1. David is saying, I haven't occupied myself with all the things I can't do or I can't understand. It's a posture of humility.

I get an urge to make sense out of everything that's happening in this world. And maybe you do too. But this verse is a good reminder for us to let those things go. And that's humility.

There's a lot going on in our world right now. There's a war in Gaza that you guys have all seen on your feeds and no doubt. We're in the middle of an election year. There's a suicide epidemic happening amongst our youth that people aren't even talking about.

Suicide rates are almost doubled post-COVID amongst youth. The busyness of this world, the tyranny of the urgent. If you're someone like me, there's a list of things I need to get done.

[13:34] And I will sacrifice everything at times in order to get those little things done. Even the important things that matter. At the end of all of this is a restlessness and a helplessness.

That when I acknowledge that I am trying to take control of my life, to be the king on the throne of my life and take control and figure things out and be diligent and work all these things through, every time I try and do that, I end up in a place once again where I am uncertain, I lack control, and I'm restless.

And there's two responses when our soul feels restless. First is pride. I'm going to figure it out. I'm going to push forward. I'm going to continue to work through this and figure it out. And this is what I'm going to call self-sufficiency.

That I am enough and I can figure out my world. The prideful heart takes on the impossible challenge of understanding the great and marvelous things. David says, I don't occupy myself with that.

That's God's agenda. But secondly, the second posture is when we feel humility, or excuse me, to feel restless, is humility, which is trusting God. And this is where David says this, I do not occupy myself with, and now I want us to read verse 2.

[14:49] But I have calmed and quieted my soul. And we'll get to the illustration here in a minute, but let's just stop right there.

Instead of, with a prideful heart, lifting ourselves up and believing that we can be the heroes of our own story, we can figure out this world and our lives and put meaning into it through what we do. Here's David's response. No, no, no. Instead, I've calmed and quieted my soul. So here's the first call for us.

Quiet your soul, Christian. Reject spiritual self-sufficiency. Embrace surrender. Pride leads us to continue to work on ourselves, believing we can save ourselves.

Because pride is the view that I don't need God and I can run my life and I know what's best. Which is the antithesis of what the Bible tells us to do. So now we see this beautiful picture in verse 2.

[16:00] And I want to spend a little bit of time here. It says this, Like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. And this is a glorious picture. Not often in the Psalms are you going to see a three-verse, three-stanza song.

Usually there's an illustration or a metaphor and then they talk more and there's another metaphor and another metaphor. It's poetry. It's beautiful. You write these things in that give meaning. But here's what's so great about Psalm 131.

David makes all of these beautiful, worshipful points and he centers it all around one image, one metaphor. Let's hone into this. Here's the picture.

My translation, most translations in here are going to say a weaned child. You might have a different translation that has a lot of similar words, like sated child. But weaned child is I think the best interpretation.

And here's the picture. A child who no longer strains and strives to be satiated with milk. This picture implies a child who has ceased from the need to nurse and feed and instead has become totally quieted in the presence of their mother.

[17:18] In other words, this is a picture of a child who has found full rest and satisfaction not only in what mother can give in milk, but now this child has found full rest and satisfaction in the actual person of mom.

And this is an amazing image. Here's why. This is true. By God's grace and favor, we have three children. All of them have been weaned as it is meaning, as it is intended to mean in this psalm. And there's something beautiful about mom feeding baby and giving that sustenance and that life and the dependence that the baby has on mom to live. Yes, I think that's even part, maybe an element here, but really what this is getting at is the truth that is so real, even today, across all generations really, that when the baby is weaned off of milk, there is no longer a desperation for something, but instead, mom and baby is the only relationship there that matters.

That the baby that is weaned off has now completely surrendered over to mom and mom can hold baby and mom can love the baby, care for the baby, nurture the baby, and that baby feels completely safe, completely at rest, completely cared for by mom.

That's the picture of the weaned child. One commentator, we understand weaned as the meaning of the verb, and the metaphor suggests a child who no longer cries out in hunger for the mother's breast, but who seeks out the mother for her warm embrace and nurturing care.

[19:05] Baby has full trust in mom. And I can tell you, all three of our children, when they got to this stage of life, they love dad, don't get me wrong, but there's no question which of us a baby prefers.

And it's still mom, and that's great, and I've embraced that. Our babies love my wife. She holds them, they're happy, they're contented. When she sits, and Camille, our youngest, who is a year old, sits in her lap, they just sit there together quietly, and Camille is just content to be with mom. And it's this picture. But what does this have to do with us? Well, I remember when I was a kid, I was about four years old, and my mom had seven children in nine years.

Crazy. My mom was amazing. And I was the third oldest, and I remember I would sit in mom's lap. She weaned me, the whole thing. I loved my mom, and my favorite thing to do is sit in mom's lap, just like this image is suggesting.

But then Kimberly came, who's my younger sister, right beneath me. And all of a sudden, mom had a new baby. And now that baby is being held a whole lot more than me. I didn't like that.

[20 : 22] Jealousy overtook little four-year-old Eric. But here's what I remember. My mom used to say this all the time. Eric, you would just stand there and stare at me, waiting for me to put down Kimberly.

And I would finally put her down to sleep or whatever, and I would turn around, and you're standing there. Like, Eric, what do you need? And you wouldn't say anything, you would just stare at me. Here's what my mom always says, but I knew exactly what you wanted.

You wanted me to hold you. She would pick me up, and she would hold me. And I remember that image my mom used to say all the time. Eric, you always wanted to be held by me. And as I read this psalm, I can't help but see the ties between the beauty of a child wanting to be held by mom, because that is the only place where I really feel safe and secure and satisfied.

But here's really how this helps us understand our relationship with God. Brothers and sisters, we are children of God.

And everything we need is caught up in Him. Everything. Everything. And just as the child no longer needs to search for the milk to be satisfied, but instead mom is all that I need to be satisfied, that's the picture, so too us in this world with great marvelous things that are happening that tempts us to trust in ourselves and look to ourselves to satisfy our hearts.

[21 : 47] No. The image here is this. Find ultimate satisfaction in the person of God. In the presence of God.

This image metaphorically means that if our faith looks anything other than an infant finding rest, contentment, and satisfaction in the arms of their mother, then we have overcomplicated our faith. Which reminds me of a passage. I believe Psalm 131 is looking forward to some words of Jesus that you may recognize as I read this.

Matthew 18, 1-4. At that time, the disciples came to Jesus saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. It says, If Jesus is preaching, his big idea is whoever assembles himself like the child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

[23 : 01] That's his big idea and where did he get that big idea from? It's as if he's preaching Psalm 131. Because the message is the same. In Psalm 131 and in Matthew 18 and here is the lesson, here is the truth.

That soul surrender to God is the pathway to a quieted and calmed heart.

Soul surrender. What's soul surrender? Soul surrender is entrusting oneself completely to the calming and quieting presence of God. And when Jesus made this statement, he was speaking to adults.

He was speaking to his disciples. Disciples who wanted to know the meaning of life that were seeking satisfaction even in Jesus. But as they do that, he looks to them and he gives them a valuable lesson and here's the lesson.

Look at this child and the way that they believe and the way that they trust and the way that they are unconstrained by the cares of the world. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest.

[24 : 17] What is Jesus talking about? He's talking about humility. He's talking about soul surrender. And this is what makes children so absolutely beautiful.

They are so willing to surrender over their souls, their minds, their little hearts. So willing. And that is one of the reasons why we need to protect our children and protect that innocence.

But here's Jesus' point. Just like the child has no concern with trusting themselves over to someone or to something, so too that is our call.

And humility is surrendering our soul over to the care and nurture of God, relinquishing my command, relinquishing my throne, allowing Jesus, the true king who is on the true throne, to also be king over my life.

That is the faith of a child. To believe fully with no doubt. Humility is rejecting the illusion that man can be self-sufficient. For it is an illusion.

[25 : 23] And this is why Jesus uses children to teach us. I want to encourage us quickly. When we see the children in our church, learn from them.

Watch their lack of concern for who gets in the office this November. Watch how they don't strive after the anxieties and worries of the world.

Watch how they are content and confident in their parents to guide, love, and nurture them as the mother weans her child. Watch our children and learn from them.

and I really believe that Jesus in this passage makes children our teachers. And so too in Psalm 131 we are taught that the example of a child fully entrusting themselves over to mom is our lesson for this morning.

This world appeals to the pride of the heart. This world appeals to the innate fleshly desire to be self-sufficient, self-made, not reliant on anyone or anything including God.

[26 : 36] But here's where I love the simplicity of Christianity that is conveyed in this passage.

Simple dependence. And there's only one thing that every culture and every time and in every place can practice when it comes to Christianity and that's dependence on God.

Soul surrender. Our relationship with God is wholly bound up and resting in God and the satisfaction He gives. Here's where I want us to understand something.

Where does that come from? God loves me, He trusts me, wants to give me that satisfaction, that care, that nurture, like a baby that's been weaned off of milk and now just loves to be with mom fully satisfied in that relationship.

I want that with God. How do I get that? It sounds amazing. Well, we have been weaned off of self-sufficiency and now we have been fully contented in God through Christ.

Jesus has made it so that our relationship with God is possible, is able because Jesus has gone to the cross.

[27 : 57] He has bore the burden. He has carried the weight of our sin. He has released from us shame and guilt and He has freed us in His grace and in His mercy to be children of God, to be adopted into His family, to hope in something greater than anything this world can offer.

That is what Jesus has done for us. And our God is wholly bound up resting in Christ and the satisfaction He gives through the gospel.

Brothers and sisters, our faith is Christ plus nothing. Jesus alone. Christ plus the political party that I choose to be a part of.

Not Christ plus my accolades. Not Christ plus my effort. Christ alone. And this is what we are invited into this morning.

That we would see the image of an infant entrusting themselves over to mom completely. And we would see Jesus making that possible.

[29 : 17] And I know that for me I have overcomplicated my faith. I have gone beyond what this text is clearly showing as simple, beautiful Christianity. I've overcomplicated my faith.

I've read every book, felt the need to read every book, felt the need to serve every person in all places and all times. I've tried to understand all theology. There's a theology I haven't studied. I've got to study that. I have fallen into the trap of trying to be the super Christian and the super pastor. I've overcomplicated so gravely what it means to be a Christian.

And if that's you today as well, here's your call. The simplicity. Take each time, each day, a time to calm and quiet your soul in Christ. Like a child and the rest of a loving mother, so too when we come before God and take that moment to calm and quiet our soul, we experience that rest.

I invite you today to surrender your soul to rest in God. Needing to figure out all the puzzles of intellect and knowledge, rest in God's perfect plan for his creation.

[30 : 28] Don't fear the happenings of the world. Don't fear those great and majestic things, but be like David who says, I've not occupied myself with that. I've occupied myself with the God who's on the throne whose hand is over every single working of every part of this world.

Instead of needing to discover our special purpose and place in the scheme of the universe, rest in God's calling on your life to be faithful and to trust in him. Instead of giving in to the pressure to be successful, pursue accolade, wealth, recognition, rest in the approval of God through the work of Jesus Christ.

Instead of working to ensure our own health and our own well-being on this earth, rest in the perfect care and nurture that God provides for our soul. I love our children and I love the fact that we have a children's ministry.

I love the fact that we have parents that love their children and for this analogy to work at any measure in our lives, we have to recognize first that it starts in our homes. That as we love our

children and offer them the same safe place where they can have a quieted and calm soul, so too we can have that with God.

So I'm going to take a minute here. I'm going to pray for our children and I'm going to pray for us as well. Lord, we thank you for this passage and we thank you that you love the children.

[31 : 53] Lord, I pray that we would see them as teachers of your truths that that innocence, that trust, that disregard for the cares and concerns of the world would not be lost on us, Lord.

Thank you for our children's ministry that is meeting right now that children are learning about you, Jesus. I pray for Colin and Kelly as they teach your word. Lord, that it would not be lost on our children the beauty of Jesus.

Help them to understand you and grasp who you are. They may follow you with full trust and a lack of striving as we see in this psalm.

For us, Lord, I pray that we would commit to this soul surrender, that we would entrust ourselves completely to you who calms and quiets us in your presence. Lord, for every person in here, I pray that this day or tomorrow or the next that we would commit to spending a portion of our day to calm and quiet our restless souls.

Lord, that we might find true rest in you. That like the child that has been weaned in the arms of their mother, Lord, we would have no concerns, no cares, only contentment in your loving arms.

[33 : 13] So God, thank you for this morning. Thank you for this text. And I pray as the last verse says in Psalm 131, that when in the reality of all of this, as we trust ourselves over to you, that we calm and quiet our souls unto Jesus, that we would also remember this, that hope in you from this time forth and forevermore.

May the posture of humility that we have bleed into that reality, that the humble hearts that make up your body would be the same humble hearts that depend on you and not ourselves, and that would lead us to hope in you.

So God, thank you for your nurturing, your care, your love, your concern for us. May we take on the posture of a weaned child who needs nothing other than their loving parent.

In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.