

True Contentment

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Date: 23 August 2026

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[0:00] Please turn your Bibles to Psalm 131, our sermon text for today. If you need a Bible, you're welcome to take one off the back table and keep it as our gift to you.

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. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks, Mitch.

[1:01] Good morning. My name is Andrew. I'm one of the elders here at Shoreline. And it's a privilege to have the chance to preach this morning. Please pray with me.

Father in heaven, I thank you for your word. You're living an active word sharper than a double-edged sword, piercing soul and spirit.

Lord, I ask that your word would do good work in our hearts this morning. The work that only your word can do. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our text this morning is Psalm 131. This is a really simple psalm about true contentment. I want to start out this morning with a story that I think illustrates well what true contentment looks like and what it doesn't look like.

This is a true story about two men. Two men searching for contentment because really, we're all searching for contentment. As a native of the Chicago suburbs who grew up in the 90s, one of my favorite athletes was Michael Jordan.

[2:12] Best basketball player ever, but that's actually not the purpose of this story. He retired for the final time in 2003, and he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009 after what some would say was an unparalleled career.

When an athlete's inducted into the Hall of Fame, they give a speech where they reflect on their career and on their life. Speeches are typically short and full of gratitude and humility.

Often, they're focused on people without whom the athlete wouldn't have achieved what they achieved. Jordan's speech was different. It did include many people, but the focus wasn't really on those people.

Instead of including in his story those who had helped him, he actually primarily included those who had doubted him. Their doubts, he said, had fueled him, and ultimately, he had proved them wrong.

To him, that's the story of his life. It was a speech about Michael Jordan's greatness, and in contrast, the foolishness of anyone who had stood in his way. He closed with these words.

[3:19] As I close, the game of basketball has been everything to me. My refuge. My place I've always gone when I needed to find comfort and peace.

It's been a source of intense pain. A source of most intense feelings of joy and satisfaction. When he turned 50, about five years later, ESPN wrote a feature story highlighting his continued competitiveness and his very evident lack of peace.

They said, Self-esteem has always been, as he says, tied directly to the game. Without it, he feels adrift. Who am I? What am I doing? For the past 10 years since retiring for the third time, he's been running, moving as fast as he could, creating distractions, distance.

When the schedule clears, he'll call his office and tell them not to bother him for a month, to let him relax and play golf. Three days later, they'll get another call, asking if the plane can pick him up and take him somewhere else.

He's restless. And they quoted him as saying, Man, I wish I was playing right now. I would give up everything now to go back and play the game of basketball. How can I enjoy the next 20 years

without so much of this consuming me, he asks.

[4:30] How can I find peace away from the game of basketball? Well, Jordan was inducted into the Hall of Fame alongside several others, including David Robinson.

While Michael Jordan and David Robinson have wealth and fame and basketball success in common, the paths of their lives have significantly diverged, as was evident in their speeches. David Robinson spent the bulk of his very short speech thanking and praising others, most notably his wife and his sons. And he ended by thanking the Lord and sharing a passage of scripture. He said that the most important thing in his life is his relationship with the Lord, and shared that his deepest desire was for everyone else in the room to come to know the Lord. It was clear from his speech and from later press releases that David Robinson thoroughly enjoyed his basketball career, but he was even more excited about the next chapter of his life, where he could spend more time with his family and where he was actually going to be focusing on starting a Christian school. To this day, Michael Jordan continues to look backward and to grasp at the glory of his basketball career. Only one of these two men has found true contentment.

[5:45] The other one hasn't. It's likely none of us will probably be famous, but if we're honest, we have the same struggle as Michael Jordan.

We struggle with the same desire for self-glory, and we find it just as empty. Tony Rinke says, Craving for self-glory is to hunger for food that does not exist.

It's to feed a fire that cannot die by feeding it. It's to be suffocated by constant fears and growing isolation. So how do we struggle for self-glory?

Well, we seek validation from our spouses for the things that we do around the house, and they never seem to notice. Maybe we seek validation for our Strava scores.

We seek validation for how advanced we are in our homeschool work relative to our siblings and our peers. Maybe we're proud of how scheduled we are as a homeschooling family, or we pride ourselves in how flexible we are as a homeschooling family, always willing to change plans at the drop of a hat.

[6:57] We're proud because we're better at piano than our siblings, or we're better at soccer or drawing. We're proud that we're good at stewarding our finances by saving money, or we're proud that we're generous with our money and we're not stingy.

We're proud of our theology, or we're proud that we're not proud of our theology, and so we feel superior to those we perceive to be proud of their theology. I could go on and on.

The point is, we seek self-glory in even the very best of things. And when we do, it brings us no peace.

Our text this morning was written by another famous, successful man, David, the king of Israel. And in it, he shares how he has reached a place of true contentment.

True contentment. And this is the outline that we're going to be following today. True contentment cannot coexist with pride.

[7:59] True contentment cannot coexist with anxiety. And you're going to see all these points again, so don't feel like you have to write it all down. True contentment means coming to God for himself, not for his benefits.

And then finally, the offer of true contentment is for everyone. And our main point this morning, it's only when we recognize that we are not God that we can be truly content with God.

So true contentment cannot coexist with pride. So the ESV translation that we typically use here at Shoreline, it's more of a word-for-word translation than a thought-for-thought translation.

And there's good reasons for that. But sometimes it can result in a text that's a little bit harder to understand. And as I was studying this, I kind of felt like this text might have been one of those.

Actually, when we were discussing in community group this week, there were pretty different interpretations as to the meaning of some of the main phrases in the psalm.

[9:10] So when we're trying to interpret a word-for-word translation, it can be helpful to pick a few key words and then find where those words are used elsewhere in Scripture.

And the context of all of those passages can help us unlock the meaning of the text that we're studying. So that's using Scripture to interpret Scripture. Not something we do all the time in our sermons, but I'm going to do that in a couple places here.

So I figured I'd just explain that up front. So the first phrase of the psalm, O Lord, my heart is not lifted up. So David starts describing the posture of his heart, which he says is not lifted up.

And this Hebrew word for lifted up is translated being high in elevation or exalted. It's a very common one in Scripture. Gavah is the Hebrew word, the root word. So twice in other places, it's used to refer to kings who became proud.

[10 : 12] 2 Chronicles says of Isaiah, The same root word is used in Proverbs.

In many places, this is just one example, pride goes before destruction, and a haughty, that's the word gavah, spirit before a fall, that's an elevated spirit.

So from the beginning, this psalm is connecting to a theme that we see throughout Scripture. Pride leads to God's judgment. It does not lead to contentment.

Think back to the story of the Tower of Babel that Mike preached on a few months ago.

So the people of the earth decided to build a tower with its top in the heavens. And they said, Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

[11 : 20] So they wanted to literally elevate themselves so that they could make a name for themselves. And what was the result? God graciously judged them by dispersing them and confusing their language.

He would not allow their pride to get in the way of him accomplishing his good purposes. God always opposes the proud. So the second phrase in the psalm, My eyes are not raised too high, echoes the first.

And so this is a distinctive Hebrew poetry called synonymous parallelism. Now we've seen it in a couple other psalms this summer. It's repetition for the point of emphasis.

So in this very short psalm, David wants to make it really clear that he's not in a place of pride. The word for raised too high, room, is different than the word for lifted up, but it has very similar connotations.

It means height or altitude. So we see it used here in Proverbs. Hottie, room, eyes, and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

[12 : 35] Here's another example from the book of Daniel. This is Daniel futilely warning Belshazzar, the final king of Babylon, that God was judging his pride as he had judged his father's pride.

He says, O king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar, your father, kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne and his glory was taken from him.

And you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed and Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

So there's a clear pattern here of God opposing those who exalt themselves. And sometimes we might think, doesn't David deserve some praise for the impressive things he accomplished?

After all, he was a pretty good king. What's wrong with David having some healthy self-esteem? Well, healthy self-esteem, which means esteeming ourselves accurately, is good.

[13 : 50] But the issue is to accurately esteem or to measure ourselves, we have to measure ourselves against God's standard. It's only his standard that matters.

Wherever we think we stand relative to other people, that's pretty irrelevant. And that's what actually gets us into trouble. It's when we measure ourselves relative to others.

Comparing ourselves to others, it's kind of like two inmates in a maximum security prison arguing over who's the better person. Neither one should feel superior to the other.

Both committed serious crimes. And when we do measure ourselves relative to God's standard, we realize we're actually pretty small.

One commentator noted that David is recounting his deliberate choice to stay small before God in this psalm. I really like that. I want to resolve to stay small before God.

[14 : 48] How foolish is it of me to try and puff myself up before God? You see, while the connotations of the words used to denote pride in this psalm are almost always negative when they're applied to humans, they're actually positive when they're used to exalt God's legitimate supremacy.

In Isaiah 1, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up. That's that word room. And his train filled the temple.

Later in Isaiah, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. it's God's place to be high and it's our place to be low.

David has learned that and he's actively rejecting self-exaltation. Now we'll come back to this, but I did want to briefly add that this gulf that exists between God and us in our essence, he is God, we're not, that doesn't automatically equate to distance between us and God.

God is distant from those who elevate themselves, but he comes close to those who humble themselves. Here's how Isaiah puts it, and we'll also see this later in Psalm 131.

[16 : 15] For thus says the one who is high and lifted up, that's that word room, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy. I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit.

This distance that exists between God and the proud, that's not God being vindictive. It's simply not possible for those who are proud to enjoy God.

When we're proud, we see the world entirely in reference to ourselves, and so we can't really enjoy anything in the world other than ourselves.

People who are full of themselves, well, we see this a little bit in celebrities. Sometimes they can be so self-absorbed it's just painfully obvious, and as a result, they can't really interact well with the world around them.

They're kind of oblivious to so much joy that they're surrounded with. But it's not just celebrities, right? I think there's a trap here for all of us. I can begin to believe that I'm pretty great, and until everyone else recognizes my greatness, I'm not going to have peace.

[17 : 33] So this is a story I love that Paul Tripp tells about family vacations that I think illustrates this really well. So he says, there's a particular thing, speaking of family vacations, that's going to be the glory of that week.

It's the morning where I make them the world's best cinnamon rolls, the best ones in the universe, no contest. And I know what's going to happen. I'm going to put those rolls in the oven, and the smell will begin to waft through that vacation house.

My children will lay in bed and say, blessed am I of all children in the universe that this man is my father. And one of them will walk down the hallway and say, blessed are you, Father, for you give us this glory.

I know that's going to happen. Well, I've made my cinnamon rolls on this morning, I put them in the oven, and I'm now sitting rather smugly in the kitchen, waiting for the first of my children to show up and tell me how wonderful I am.

Well, my oldest son shows up and he says these words, do you mind if I make something else for breakfast? What do you mean, do I mind? I'm thinking, what a dumb question. Of course I mind. And then he says this, my wife, interloper in the family that she is, doesn't want something so sweet for breakfast.

[18 : 49] I'm thinking, how dare she? I'm Paul Cinnamon Roll Trip. He says, I'm going to make some scrambled eggs. Scrambled eggs? Eggs? Who is she?

I know this shouldn't bother me, but it does. I know it's not important to me, but it is. Now we're at breakfast and she positions herself right directly in front of this glorious tray of cinnamon rolls.

She's eating her stupid eggs. I can hear her chew every bite. I'm not supposed to be paying attention, but I am. I'm offended with every swallow. You see, we tend to attach ourselves to hope that just will never deliver what we're asking it to deliver.

A similar story from my life, I sort of stumbled on a method at work for solving a particular problem, and it's a better method than the old method. And for a while, I was the only one using this new method, and I was kind of encouraging other people to use it.

Now, I didn't come up with the method. People way smarter than me did. I kind of just stumbled on it and started using it. But over time, you know, I kind of started thinking of it as my method. I felt some ownership. Well, over a couple years, it spread throughout the department, and now it's pretty widely used.

[20 : 01] And I've noticed, several years later, people seem to have forgotten that I was a pretty key factor in us using this method. Some people even hired recently aren't aware at all.

So there's a piece of me when people are, you know, somebody's telling someone about this method, how much better it is than the old method. I'm waiting for them to say my name. You know, and when they don't say my name, I'm kind of thinking like, wonder if there's a way I could just remind them, you know, because otherwise, people are going to forget, right?

You know, and that's pride. That's self-exaltation. When I say it out loud, you know, it sounds pretty silly and kind of, you know, gross, really. But in my head, in the moment, you know, that can seem pretty reasonable.

I'm only asking for the credit that I deserve, right? Is that so bad? But really, there's a restlessness there that comes with pride. There's no true contentment there.

We can even have really good things and be in the middle of something really good, but there's no peace. So true contentment cannot coexist with pride.

[21:11] True contentment cannot coexist with anxiety. So this is the next line of the psalm. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

So here, David states that his mind and his heart are not occupied by things too great and too marvelous for him. So what does he mean by too great? And too marvelous.

Well, both the words for great and marvelous are words that are typically attributed to things the Lord has done or miracles that he has done.

Things he has made or things he has done. So I will make of you a great nation in Exodus. before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been created in all the earth or any nation.

Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wondrous works. And this is just a short snapshot.

These words are all through scripture. Coincidentally, the word for too marvelous is used five times in Psalm 107 which Jordan just preached on to refer to the Lord's wonderful works.

[22:26] David says in the next line that he has calmed and quieted his soul. So I think what he's saying here is there are things in my life, these are the things that God does, they're beyond my ability to understand or to control.

They're above my pay grade. So I'm going to leave those things up to him. I'm not going to try and control these things and I'm not going to allow my soul to spin on them.

So what might those things have been for David? Well, we don't know. Perhaps he wrote this psalm while he was avoiding Saul and waiting for God to fulfill his promise to put David on the throne.

We know from the biblical account that during that season David trusted that God would be faithful to his promise without having a clue how God would bring it about. But of course we don't know for certain whether that's the context of this psalm.

He could have written it at any point while navigating all the unknowns of ruling a kingdom, fighting wars, unrest in the kingdom, unrest in his family, so many things just totally outside his control.

[23:35] Well, we were just talking about pride and what's pride? Well, at its root it's a striving to put ourselves in the place of God. It's rebellion. It's going our own way.

We can probably see that pretty clearly with pride. I think it's a little bit more subtle but the root of anxiety is also often a desire to be in control of things that we cannot control.

In other words, it's a different way that we try to put ourselves in God's place. Pride is what we feel when we try and put ourselves in God's place and things are going well.

Anxiety is what we feel when we try and put ourselves in God's place and either they're not going well or we're afraid they might not go well in the future. Paul Miller says, Anxiety wants to be God but lacks God's wisdom, power, or knowledge.

A God-like stance without God-like character and ability is pure tension. We want to control things that are above our pay grade and we can't control them and so we spin on them.

[24:48] We worry. We can't sleep. This desire to put ourselves in God's place, it's not a new problem. It's been our problem ever since the garden when the serpent offered Adam and Eve the chance to become like God and they took it and instead of becoming like God, they lost their close fellowship with him.

Now there's a lot more than this that can be said about anxiety. Paul talks in 2 Corinthians 11 about his daily anxiety for the churches so it sounds like not all anxiety is sinful, at least not initially.

This text is focused on anxiety that at its root is a reaching for control of things we cannot control and so that's where we're going to be focused this morning.

And I know also I think it's worth saying this isn't the way that our culture typically talks about anxiety. Our culture focuses more on the significant physical and mental contributors to anxiety that are very complicated.

but our culture tends to talk about anxiety in only physical and mental terms. To our culture there's no connection between our anxiety and our souls.

[26:03] And that shouldn't be a surprise to us, right? Since our secular society is largely built on a materialistic view of the world. So that's really the only avenue they have for understanding the human body and brain.

As Christians though, we know that God made us both body and soul and our bodies and our souls are connected in ways that we can't fully understand and they affect one another.

So our culture probably shouldn't be the only voice we listen to when we're trying to understand our anxious hearts. We need to allow God's word to diagnose and speak into our anxiety as well.

In this modern age we have far more control over our lives than people have ever had over their lives throughout all of history. Because of modern medicine we can fend off all sorts of diseases that kill or debilitated millions in previous centuries.

Because of communication technology we can communicate with anyone anywhere in the world at any time. And we can communicate on many different channels simultaneously. That would have been unthinkable at any other point in history.

[27:12] Because of transportation technology we can travel virtually anywhere in the world at any time. We live in a country that gives us the freedom to choose many aspects of our future.

The career we pursue the place we live the things that we fill our time with. We have control over some of the tiniest details of our lives. With an app on my phone I can control the temperature of my house while I'm 800 miles away in Indiana.

But paradoxically as we've seen to gain more control over our lives we've also become more anxious. tons of studies show that. It seems as though while we've gained the illusion of control we actually have no more control than we did before.

There are plenty of bad things in life that now we're better at avoiding. But there are also new bad things we're encountering that previous generations never did. And so the anxiety is that much worse when life inevitably does not go our way and that illusion of control is shattered.

I often find myself going through life thinking if I could just change this thing and this thing and maybe this thing then things will be okay and I'll be content.

[28:27] But that line of thinking is a trap. The reality is we never get there. That life where everything is just right is always over the horizon and it never arrives.

We long for a relationship and the relationship comes and it isn't what we hoped for. Maybe we even feel trapped in it. We long for a job and it disappoints.

The hours are long. We don't like our boss. We long for a house and it turns out to be more of a burden than we expected. It's not good for us to go through life this way.

Eventually it's a path to anger at God for not giving us what we want. Anger at others for not being who we want them to be. And that anger eventually turns into bitterness.

The thing is when we find ourselves busy pursuing contentment and things working out just the way we want them to to use David's words when we find ourselves occupied pursuing control over those things at some point we realize we've stopped pursuing the one who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all.

[29:34] How will he not also along with him graciously give us all things? If he gave up his son for us we can trust him with our burdens. Let's go to him with our burdens and receive the rest that only he can offer trusting that he'll graciously give us all the things that we need when we need them and how we need them.

So true contentment cannot coexist with anxiety. Just a brief point of application here. People wiser than me have pointed out that of all the conveniences of modern life our phones in particular can tempt us to that illusion of being in control.

They're an easy avenue for us to put ourselves in God's place. They provide us with up to the access or access to up to the minute breaking news and we have all the world's knowledge at our fingertips.

That gives us the illusion that we're omniscient. We can carry on virtually unlimited conversations simultaneously and be present in all kinds of online communities all at once giving us the illusion that we're omnipresent.

Our phones and currently AI in particular hold out that promise of instant virtually unlimited creativity and productivity giving us the illusion that we're omnipotent.

[30:53] Now having and using a smartphone is not a sin. Nothing up there on the screen is a sin. I definitely want to be clear on that but just recognize there is a really clear path of temptation here

and that path if we walk it it does not lead us to contentment.

The studies seem to show that it leads instead to greater anxiety. The story in the Bible of Mary and Martha two sisters it's one of the best examples in scripture of someone who's anxious about what seems to be a good thing but at its root it's a desire to control.

This is how Luke recounts the story and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house and she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching but Martha was distracted with much serving and she went up to him and said Lord do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Don't tell her to help me. But the Lord answered her Martha Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.

So Mary thinks the right thing to do right now is to get this house clean for the Lord and to make sure all the food is just right and everyone's cup is full and Mary doesn't see it that way and she chooses a different path.

[32:31] Mary's actions are outside her sister's control but Martha won't accept that and so Martha says I know what I'll do I'll shame my sister in front of the Lord and then he will rebuke her and I will get her to do what I want but instead Jesus very gently exposes Martha's heart rebukes her and points her to the right path.

Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her. So two things to note here notice that the things that are too great and too wonderful for us that David talks about those aren't just things that are big and grand you know you can live a very simple life and make the mistake of thinking that's just not something I struggle with I'm not tempted toward things that are too great and too wonderful for me but the too great and too wonderful things are really just things that are not ours to control they're things that are God's to control so Mary's behavior was not Martha's to control and Martha couldn't accept that she grasped for that control and it made her anxious so to the kids in the room have you ever tried to control your sibling does that ever happen in your family a second thing to note here notice how the good things Martha's spinning on being a good hostess here is actually a barrier to her enjoying the Lord's presence he's physically present with her in her house and she does not have peace in her heart because she's grasping for control can you imagine that

Jesus in your house and you're all flustered and have no peace but we're no better than Martha right we have Jesus living in us and yet we so often lack peace and contentment so it's only when we recognize that we're not God that we can be truly content with God so how do we rid ourselves of pride and anxiety well in one sense we can't David who's our positive example in this text he ended up abusing his position as king when he committed adultery and murder because he wanted someone else's wife the Lord said to David through the prophet Nathan you have shown utter contempt!

for the Lord contempt for the Lord that sounds like pride David elevating himself to the place of God he also sinned in counting all the fighting men in Israel and all of Israel was judged because of his sin why would he count the fighting men well pride the army was a measure of his strength so David elevated himself he failed but there was another man that Isaiah talks about all throughout the book of Isaiah the elevation of men is bad and the elevation of God is good and right but then Isaiah talks about this mysterious servant behold my servant shall act wisely he shall be high that's that word room and lifted up and shall be exalted gava so wait a minute Isaiah has made it clear that these terms only apply to God that when men are exalted they're judged so who is this man and we know what Isaiah's audience didn't this man is

Isaiah is talking here about Jesus the man who was God the only person who truly deserves to be exalted but while we routinely grasp for his high position Philippians 2 says Jesus was in the form of God he voluntarily took on our low position he didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped but he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and he didn't stop there taking a human body he went even lower when Isaiah talks about the servant being lifted up he's pointing to the cross where the sinless son of God died the death of a criminal Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross and that lifting up was for a glorious purpose he was wounded for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace and with his stripes we are healed he paid the price for even our heinous pride and our grasping at control so that we could be at peace

with God so that we could enjoy fellowship with the

[37:27] Lord I think sometimes my first thought when I read Philippians 2 is shame it exposes my proud and I think wow I'm really that proud man I blew it but then my next thought is wow he really loved me that much you know I only understand my sin in glimpses he understands he understands far more how sinful we are and yet he knew that and he went all the way to the cross out of love so how do we rid ourselves of pride and anxiety well we look to Jesus to rid ourselves of pride and anxiety he does it by his payment for our sin once and for all on the cross and he does it as we become more like him as we imperfectly attempt to walk the path that he walked and when we stop exalting ourselves then we're free to bow the knee to Jesus and to glory in his rightful exaltation true contentment means coming to

God for himself not for his benefits David says in verse two! Now I'll be honest with you I've loved this psalm a long time but I didn't know what a weaned child was until I was preparing to preach this psalm I always thought that meant a nursing child turns out it means the exact opposite it means a weaned child is a child that's been weaned off of its mother's milk so I'd always read this as I'm like a nursing child with its mother who's just perfectly at peace in the presence of its mother you know we've probably all seen an infant in that state with its mother you know it just finished nursing it's kind of awake kind of asleep just totally physically and mentally relaxed in its mother's arms and I think that picture does capture a part of what David's communicating here but I think it misses maybe a deeper point

David specifically uses the metaphor of a weaned child and so that's a child that's with its mother simply because it wants to be with her a nursing child reflexively reaches for its mother every time it's hungry and if it doesn't immediately get what it wants it gets frantic right maybe even angry sometimes a weaned child reaches for its mother simply because it wants its mother it wants to be in her presence so I think that's maybe the main thrust of this metaphor so what does it look like for us to come to God for himself not for what he offers us how do we reach this state of contentment and trust in the Lord well I think we see from the verbs in verses one and two I do not occupy myself and I have calmed and quieted my soul that we do take an active role in the contentment of our souls but I think the active part of that process for us is the recognition that we're not God the intimate fellowship with the

Lord that verse two portrays is simply the natural result of that recognition when we realize we're not God and stop trying to be we stop our striving and we come to God for himself when we're trying to be God we're often primarily pursuing other things a relationship a job a house and we're primarily coming to him for the purpose of getting those things think back to Adam and Eve before sin entered the world they were regularly walking with God in the cool of the day in the garden they enjoyed God's presence simply because they enjoyed him that's what life was like before they sinfully reached for God's position and it all changed enjoying close fellowship with God is what each person not just Adam and Eve but each person ever created was made for and this place of contentment in the

Lord's presence is the place of ultimate joy Psalm 16:11 says you make known to me the path of life in your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forevermore this is a joy that's not dependent on our circumstances and it brings a peace that passes all understanding the offer of true contentment is for everyone verse 3 says oh Israel hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore so in this last verse David invites all Israel to experience the true contentment that he has found by placing their hope in the Lord rather than in themselves or external things or in other people if you take an honest look at your soul this morning are you in a place of true contentment maybe you've experienced true contentment in the past but today you find yourself in a different place maybe a place of pride or anxiety if that's you look to

[43:16] Jesus the only one worthy to be lifted up recognize your attempts to try to be God for what they are it's only when we recognize that we're not God by forsaking our pride and our anxiety that we can be truly content with simply knowing and being with God maybe you've never actually come to the Lord for contentment maybe you've only looked for contentment in other places if that's you you should know that the reason Jesus was lifted up was to draw all people to himself he says in the book of John and I when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself he said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die he willingly went to the cross out of love for the world so that whoever would believe in him can have eternal life that means peace and contentment with him for eternity if you've never placed your faith in

Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins or if you have but you're currently in a place of discontentment consider this invitation from Isaiah as an invitation to you!

Come everyone who thirsts come to the waters and he who has no money come buy and eat come buy wine and milk without money and without price why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food incline your ear and come to me hear that your soul may live seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near father would you help us to humble ourselves casting our anxieties on you because you care for us would you help us to stop reaching for your position and to simply enjoy you for who you are amen