

# Psalm 61

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[0:00] My name is Brad Allen, and my wife is back there. And that jetpack she has strapped to her has a baby inside named Elizabeth, and it's our daughter.

! She's about seven months old. We've been going to Shoreline for about six years here. So that's just a little bit about us. I'm talking about Psalm 61 today, and I'm really excited to talk about it because it is a psalm that has meant a lot to me for a few years now.

So when it was the psalm series and they announced that they'd be looking for people to talk about and get to actually pick their psalm, I snagged that one pretty quick. So anyway, if you have your Bible today, if you could turn to Psalm 61 with me and read it together.

To the choir master with stringed instruments of David. Hear my cry, O God. Listen to my prayer.

From the ends of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. Let me dwell in your tent forever. Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings.

[1:23] For you, O God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. Prolong the life of the king. May his years endure to all generations.

May he be enthroned forever before God. Appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him. So will I sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day.

Today we are going to be looking at this psalm and I kind of tried to make a thesis statement to do our coverall. So when someone asks you in the car, kids, on the way home, what did you learn today? You can just say this.

Or at the dinner table, what did you get out of that sermon, honey? You can just say this. So write it down. Bold, dependent prayer is the overflow of a humble heart that believes in the personal and powerful nature of God's promises.

Before we go any further, let me pray over our time together this morning. God of the universe, Heavenly Father, Lord, you are here right now.

[2:48] And that is amazing. And that is something that even when we know, we still struggle to comprehend, Lord. But you are, and we thank you for that.

We pray that today you would give us ears to hear. We pray that your spirit would work on our heart, Lord. We pray that we would just approach these truths with humility.

Both acknowledging that we can't perfectly follow the instructions of your word, but your spirit can perfectly. We thank you for that.

We thank you that your word is living and active. And today, that as we read from your word, even the imperfect human things that will get in the way or could get in the way, they won't get in the way of you, Lord.

And we just pray that you would have your way with this service in our hearts today. We love you, Lord. Amen. Amen. So before we start today, I want to ask you all a question.

[3:52] I want to ask you, who do you call when you need help? That's pretty vague, so I'll ask a couple specifics here. Who has the spare keys to your house?

Or who is the emergency babysitter for the kids? Or we could even ask for some of us, which one of the bros is spotting you at the gym later today?

And no, I'm not thinking of every kid's favorite weightlifting landlord, but Jake Jimenez does check all those boxes, technically. So think about who is the person helping you out?

Then I want you to think about why is it that person? Why is that the person with the keys? Why is that the first person you call or that you let know that you will call eventually?

Save your answers for later, and we're going to jump into the psalm. The superscription to Psalm 61 says, So this psalm was a song to the choir master to teach and lead others in.

[4:58] The superscription also lets us know that this psalm was written by David. The specific situation that brought David to write this psalm is not mentioned anywhere. We can assume, though, that the psalm was influenced by something David was going through personally, and in turn, the Spirit led him to write this psalm out of those circumstances, but also for other people.

With this information in mind, I want to reread the first half of the psalm, and then we'll look at it. Hear my cry, O God. Listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. Let me dwell in your tent forever.

Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. Salah. Requests are threaded through the whole first half of this psalm, and are given an especially desperate tone when verses 2 says, From the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.

David is at his rope's end. And what does he do? He does what any human does when they are willing to admit they are in a pinch. He asks for help.

[6:20] If we look closely, I think there is a progression to the requests. I think there seems to be an escalation. David begins the psalm with wanting to be heard and describing a desperate situation.

He says, Hear my cry. Listen to my prayer. Then he says, From the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. We might say that the request doesn't sound too intense yet, but that the situation does.

The next request builds though. He says, Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.

David asks to be led now, not just heard. David gives assent to the fact that he wants help from someone greater than himself, specifically the rock that is higher.

This is Israel's king, David the warrior king, humbly communicating a needy state.

[7:23] Also notice that with this humble tone comes confidence.

Confidence that is placed in the Lord's based on something he has already done.

Now in verse 4, at the end of the first half of the psalm, there's a sort of crescendo. Let me dwell in your tent forever.

Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. If these two requests don't stand out to you, they should. This request is extremely personal, very intimate.

It's pretty bold. Think about the components of these requests up here. It says, let me dwell in your tent. That's God's house. And then forever.

Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings. A request like this shows the nature of David's relationship with God. Bold and personal.

[8:24] The description of under the shelter of your wings adds to this definition of this relationship. It is parental and very close. The symbolic reference of a mother bird's relationship to its chicks tells us David wanted to be close and he wanted to be comforted.

This is a longing to be lovingly and protectively consoled. Let's see how David continues this desperate prayer in verses 5-8.

Verses 5-8 say, Amen. For you, O God, have heard my vows. You have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. Prolong the life of the king.

May his years endure to all generations. May he be enthroned forever before God. Appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him.

So will I ever sing praises to your name as I perform my vows day after day. Amen. Did you notice the change of tone in the first half of the song?

[9:36] Personally, knowing that this was written to the choir master, I think of this might be where there's a key change, one of those dramatic ones from like the 80s or something, or really changes the pitch.

David has begun the second part of this psalm by referencing two specific things that have already happened. Two specific things, not general. He says, There is a sense of certainty.

David is not requesting. Instead, he is resting. David already knows and believes something that God has already done.

He seems to be putting the weight of all of the requests from those first four verses on this heritage that he has received.

So what is the heritage? In 2 Samuel chapter 7, God made a promise directed to David, and it reads like this.

[10:43] This is just a portion of this promise God made. God said to David, God promised.

God promised to David to give him rest.

He promised to preserve his lineage. He promised to establish his kingdom and make him a house. This is the promise of an inheritance, and he received this promise directly from God through the prophet Nathan.

David was feeling as weak as he could be while still being alive. He was feeling as far away from all help as he could be while still being on this earth.

And this is the promise he goes to. Why would David make this promise the focus and foundation of his confidence?

[12:04] I think if we continue reading, we can draw some truth out of that. Verses 6-8 say, This is a continuation of the bold prayer.

David is claiming and proclaiming what God has told him. David has staked his life on the promise of God, and so he makes bold prayers regarding his royal lineage.

To add another layer to his boldness, consider the fact that David wrote this for other people to sing and pray. He knew that the implication of God's promises extended past his own personal and temporary situation.

In the 2 Samuel, or Davidic covenant, we saw the Lord promise care and providence in many ways, and David confidently took this promise to heart.

So later in 2 Samuel 7, David wrote a prayer back to God of gratitude. This is part of that prayer that David prayed back to God. David said, For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying, I will build you a house.

[13:32] Therefore, your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.

David recognizes the very personal nature of God's promise, but also how far-reaching God's promises are.

There is one more detail I want to point out about the second half of the psalm. David was intentionally nesting these promises between the mentions of vows.

Vows are mentioned twice, creating two bookends around the second half of this psalm. A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Kent explained that this is called an inclusio.

An inclusio indicates that the vows are important. It also indicates that the verses they surround are important. In verse 5, David mentions vows he already made, and then at the very end of verse 8, he says that he will continue to perform vows.

[14:49] Because the vows surround covenantal language, I believe the covenant was the primary focus of the vows. I think David was regularly returning to the words of the covenant and basking in their depth.

I think he was feasting on the promise that the God of Israel had made to him. He was nurturing his affections with the knowledge of what the Lord said, and he was leveraging all his mental and physical capacity regularly in order to feed his heart and soul.

And in the end, when his heart was faint, and when he felt distant and desperate, his heart was primed to be boldly dependent on the Lord and anchored in his promises.

So what does this all mean for us today? That's a lot about David. That's a lot about this psalm.

How can we translate it to us? My first point, I think this is a model for prayer, to come to the Lord

honestly desperate, but also completely confident.

David did not withhold how he was feeling. To some, this could seem unflatteringly childlike.

Remember, David was royalty. He was king of the Israelites, and he had led armies into battle.

[16:15] Yet, he wanted to lead in this way. He wanted to lead others in crying out to God. We are shown that crying out for help is not something we grow out of.

Rather, God can use desperation to guide our hearts towards him. God has not withheld his offer of full and confident reassurance from anyone.

Consider what Jesus said in Matthew 23. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing. If Jesus has a heart like this towards his enemies, he had a heart like this towards the people who killed the prophets he sent, how much more towards us, his children?

Jesus also said earlier in the book of Matthew in chapter 7, Ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who seeks, for everyone who asks, receives.

[17:35] And the one who seeks, finds. And the one who knocks, it will be opened. Or, which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?

Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?

We can seek, we can knock, we can ask to be led to the rock. This is a model of how to be honestly desperate.

We can freely express our needs and emotions to God, yet we can also be completely confident. We go to God with our needs because he is the only one who can fully meet them.

I want to pause here for a moment and be a little extra clear. Being humble and willing to ask for help, sounds like good life advice.

[18:47] But this is not just good life advice. The Bible is not just a book of good principles, good rules, good things.

This psalm points us to the rock that is higher than all of humanity. Solomon Raxias says this, Many things in life have a weight limit.

Trampolines, bridges, bicycles, skateboards exceed that capacity and they will bend, snap, and collapse.

But God's promises are not like that. There is no weight limit. They will never break. They won't even bend. They can sustain all the weight you can put on them and not just yours, but the weight of your entire community, even the weight of the world.

This psalm teaches God's children to lean way into God's promises.

[20:09] If you aren't sure if these promises are for you and if you don't know the God of the Bible personally like David did, the reason, know this, the reason Jesus came to this earth was to purchase your eternal security for you, to save you from sin and death.

He is waiting and he is willing. Romans 10 says, For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. You can call out to the Lord today because he is the only one who can save.

There are a lot of people here at Shoreline who would be happy to talk more about this or come alongside you, and we are really good at standing around after church here.

I think Rob mentioned that even last week, so it must be true. That's an inclusio right there. Last week, this week. Probably not accurate. But the point is, if you have questions about this, please don't leave with talking to someone, even asking a simple question, don't leave.

Stay, ask a question, ask for help. Second, this is, this shows us what the Lord wants us to want. This is my second point here.

[21:30] God's desire is that we find our refuge in him over and over. He is the rock that is higher, greater, and stronger, more than we could comprehend. He is better than we could ever deserve, and yet, he welcomes

us to draw near.

In our greatest struggles and afflictions, he wants us to go to him and see that he is the answer to our greatest needs. All the gifts and blessings he gives us pales in comparison to his beauty and majesty.

He offers his love, his nearness, his relationship. He invites us to dwell with him and be under the shelter of his wings. He offers himself to us, and that is an unfading, never-ending, always-growing joy to have.

But what keeps us from going to God? It is our perceived self-sufficiency, our independence, and our pride.

But here in this psalm, we have seen an example of letting go or even running in the opposite direction of those things. David was a warrior king, yet he prays.

[22:49] David was a king, yet he wants to be led. David had slain his tens of thousands, yet he wants to take refuge.

David clung to the greatest promise he had from the greatest person he could possibly know, and it was identity-changing, paradigm-shifting, and life-giving.

I think it is a very human thing to try and tone down our neediness. We don't want to feel needy. We don't want to think we are needy. And probably worst of all, we project human qualities onto God and think he might get tired of us or doesn't really want us to go to him.

Those are just human qualities. And it's completely the opposite of what I think this psalm shows us. The Lord wants us to come to him always. When we try to tone down our neediness, we are diminishing the very space where God desires to show himself as truly sufficient, remarkably sustaining, and marvelously satisfying.

My daughter Elizabeth is asleep right now, but she's also seven months old. And as a new dad, I am really enjoying watching her become more independent.

[24:16] But the more independent she becomes, the more I realize she needs me less. She used to need me to pick her up and move her across the room, and now when I turn around for two seconds, she appears on the other side of the room.

For better or for worse. What I am slowly realizing is that I actually enjoy helping her and being her go-to person. I enjoy just about any time we spend together, and I'm starting to see how much of that together time is actually born out of her reliance on me as her person.

Someday she'll probably, hopefully, be more independent, and because of that, we probably won't spend as much time together. I will probably have to find other ways and be creative to find other ways to show that I love her.

She won't just look up at me and great, I can show you now. If you've ever loved someone in a similar way, you know it can bring you great delight to be able to provide for them.

As humans, that doesn't last forever. We eventually grow tired or we make mistakes, we fail. But God is perfect and never ceases to delight to provide for his children.

[25:43] He never tires, never runs out of patience, and we could never deplete the riches of his love that he desires to show us.

God's ability shines through our inability when we fervently depend on him. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

For the sake of Christ, then I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God desires we rely on him so that he can show his sufficiency to us and to others. Maybe you are in a place right now where you feel you are calling out to God.

Maybe you have been for a while and you are starting to wonder if he can hear you. First, I want to encourage and affirm that he does hear you.

[27:01] The Bible says he does and that is the promise I want to encourage you to cling to. Second, other people here at Shoreline want to encourage you too.

The Christian walk is not meant to be done alone and part of being humble and acknowledging our neediness is also being able to ask others for help. In Galatians, we are told to bear each other's burdens.

I know that is what many Shoreline members are offering to do when they ask, how are you doing? They actually want to know. So if you are feeling a weight like this today, please don't leave without letting someone come alongside you.

My third and last point for today. David made vows. he understood the promises to be personal and so his devotion was personal.

I wonder if you read your name in the Bible, would it hit you differently? if you opened up the cover and noticed at various points that the writer was in fact addressing you as an individual, you specifically, would you be surprised?

[28:36] I would. I do not know of any brads in the Bible. No Braddock covenant. If we felt like God made this, made all his promises directly to us, I think we would be doing the same thing David did.

I think if we saw God as someone who knew us as individuals and wrote all the promises in his word to us personally, I think we might hop out of bed every morning and go to his word to see what else he tells us about himself or has planned for our lives and the rest of creation.

When I was reading this passage, when I started reading the Davidic covenant, I kind of had a moment of jealousy, full disclosure. I was jealous of the personal nature of God's covenant with David.

Then I caught myself. I had just put a human limitation on God as if he doesn't know me personally. I felt like David had some spectacular connection. But the truth is this. God did not just write the Bible with a generic crowd of people in mind like a regular human author.

[30:02] God wrote the Bible with individual people on his heart. He is able to do that. He did that.

He wrote a book of promises. The Bible is a book that shows God's character throughout history. It also shows who he promises to always be to us.

He wants to reveal himself to us through the written word of the Bible. the promises are for us as his people but also for you as his child.

God wants you to know and feel the close individual nature of all his promises. All over the Bible he makes it clear by saying things like rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Even breath. No, I'm sure. Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows.

[31:20] David encourages all of us to know this when he writes in Psalm 139, how precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them.

If I could count them, they are more than the sand. I totally recommend Psalm 139 as a follow-up reading, by the way, this sermon.

that's your homework. God is not a human author who wrote a human book that he encourages, hopes encourages many humans.

God is an all-knowing, all-powerful God who authored the Bible when he already knew you before you were born because he wants you to know him and trust his promises now.

Whether or not we view God's promises as directed to us as individuals can have a huge impact on the attention we give them.

[32:30] We may not find all our names in the Bible, but what we do find in the New Testament is the where the full manifestation of the Davidic covenant occurred in Christ's coming.

He came to earth as a man to purchase our salvation so we could live with him for eternity. And now each one of his children is sealed with a promise, the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1 reads, in him you also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

there was a jarring moment in David's life when he was a direct recipient and felt especially known by God.

That is us too. We are his children. God knows each one of us intimately and in turn has provided for each one of us individually.

[33:47] His promises are sufficient for every aspect of our life because he knows each aspect. He knows us.

It is my prayer that the next time you open up a Bible that this truth will have an impact on how you read it. So back to our opening question.

Who do you trust with the spare keys? Who do you call when the babysitter cancels at the last minute? Which bro has your back at the gym? Who do you ask for help?

I'm guessing it is someone trustworthy, someone reliable, someone strong. Above all, I assume it is someone who you know and knows you.

Someone you have a personal relationship with. It is not a matter of if we will need help. It is a matter of when we choose to acknowledge it.

[34:58] And I think if we consider the magnitude of God's love and transcendence, we might get a clearer picture of how much he delights when we call out to him for help.

God's let's close in prayer. Lord, you are faithful and loving and we know that because we know you, we see what you have done in your word.

We thank you for that gift, Lord. You are not far away. You are not resistant to us, Lord. We thank you that you invite us to come to you.

You don't just, you don't wait far off and make us do the hard climb to you, Lord. You invite us, you run towards us. We praise you for being mighty, Lord, for being more able than we can really comprehend.

You're the only one that can supply what we need the most, Lord, and we thank you for that. Amen.