

Tears, Fears, Faith and Song

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[0 : 00] Well, I wish everybody a very good evening as we gather together to worship God. And again, we give God thanks for the opportunity of being able to worship in this way.

We do miss church, but we give thanks that we are able to have fellowship in this way. And we pray that each and every one of us who tunes into this service may know the riches of God's grace and his blessing.

We're going to begin with a word of prayer. Lord our God, we pray to bless us this evening. We give thanks for your goodness and mercy, which you have promised will follow us all the days of our life. We give thanks, Lord, for your grace, a grace that has proved sufficient. Because you have said that my grace is sufficient for you. And so often we find this in life, that we meet situations and experiences that sometimes we think are too much for us.

And yet you've taken us through. And so many people today, they're in a place where they cannot get over, that they are actually there. Because the experiences in life were so harrowing and so difficult that they thought that they would go under.

[1 : 16] But you have led them on and taken them on. Even although there may be a pain that remains in the heart for life. Yet, Lord, you have sustained and you do, you promise this.

And so we ask, Lord, that we might be able to commit our all to you. And that we might be able to know your presence and your peace every day and every night.

This is what you have promised to give your people, your presence and your peace. And we ask, Lord, that we might be aware of it. We're very conscious of how our own sin can blot out these things and block them out.

Not that you have changed. Not that you have removed yourself from us. But our sin can be such a barrier so that we're not conscious of your presence and of your peace.

And so, Lord, we pray that you'll grant us the grace to deal with our sin. And in the God-given way, where we're able to come to you and repent of our sin. And ask for that cleansing which alone is found in Jesus.

[2 : 19] Because we know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. Pray that you'll be with every single one today. Not only those who tune in, but those who have no concern for their soul.

Who today, as your word says, is in the broad road that leads to destruction. We ask, Lord, that many of them will hear your voice. And that even in the voice of providence that we're meeting in our nation and throughout the nations of this world.

That we may turn to you. And so often it is in times of extremity. That it is a time of God's opportunity. And so many people, as they realize that life is not what they thought it was.

And how quickly everything can change. All the might and all the wealth and all the power and all the glory of this world. It's really like a shadow that is there for a little while and then disappears.

And we're brought to see that. That we often use the expression, nothing stays the same. But we're certainly seeing that today. And so we pray that in all our dealings with one another.

[3 : 32] And in all our dealings, especially with you. That we may seek to have you at the very center of all that we're about. Pray to bless us nationally and internationally.

Lord, we pray a vaccine will be found. An effective one. And that you will bring an end to this devastating virus. That is bringing so much hurt and so much destruction throughout the nations of this world.

We find ourselves in a state of helplessness. And we pray, Lord, that you will grant your wisdom to those who are seeking for this vaccine.

And those who are seeking to bring something that will help to cure or to alleviate. To take the worst effects of this illness away.

And we pray that it will be done so that your people will be able to see your hand at work in this.

And so we pray that we will be able to give you the glory and the honor. Help us, Lord, not to take the glory and honor to ourselves, which we're so prone to do.

[4 : 38] We pray to bless all our frontline workers. And again, we commit them all to your care and keeping. We pray to bless all the work that goes on and all the staff of the NHS. Particularly those at the forefront.

Pray, Lord, that you will be with them. And those who have gone through very harrowing experiences and times and difficulties. We pray, Lord, for our carers. Our carers in homes and carers within our community.

Lord, we give thanks for the wonderful work that they do. And we give thanks, Lord, that our communities are filled with people who have a great heart for those that they care for.

Protect them, we pray, and do them good. We pray, Lord, for the homes where the virus has taken hold. We think of the home in Skye, which is closer to us.

And we pray, Lord, for all such, all homes throughout our land. We commit to your care and keeping. And so we pray for all who keep the economy running.

[5 : 39] All who are the essential workers. We're often putting themselves at risk. So we pray, Lord, for all in supermarkets and lorry drivers and posties and teachers.

And all who are involved in keeping the country going. Lord, we give thanks for them. Watch over us the time that we wait upon thee.

Bless this word. May we hear your word. May you speak to us, Lord. And that we will know that you are our God. And forgive us, we pray, our every sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. I'm just going to say a wee word to any young folk who are tuning in this evening. And last week we were looking at how the Lord, who is our shepherd, is with us in death's dark veil.

And I gave a story from the late Douglas Macmillan. But in the fields behind us here at the house, there are plenty sheep and plenty lambs at this time of year.

[6 : 43] And they're wonderful to watch. And just the night before last, I had the window open upstairs. And I was looking out for a wee while because it's lovely to see the sheep lying down.

And there's something really peaceful in watching the little lambs sometimes playing. And just the sheep, they seem to be so chilled, so enjoying having their little lambs.

It was a scene of just absolute peace. There wasn't a sound. And then this sheep that was a wee up the top of the field, way far up, it had been just munching away.

And all of a sudden it lifted its head and it started meh. Meh! Meh! And then two little lambs that were wee down at the other end of the field that were lying beside a sheep, they got up and they ran as fast as they could all the way up the field.

And they went meh, meh, and running full up. And I thought that they had been lying beside their mother. But obviously that wasn't their mother. And their mother had all of a sudden noticed, where are my twins?

[7 : 59] And like any mother who cares, the mother's sheep started mehing and the two wee ones ran up. And it was very obvious that they were very thirsty because they came in one side and the other on the other side and started, whoa, in under their mum, getting a really good drink.

And I was just saying that is so what mums do. The mother's sheep does it. And our mums. That's what our mums are like. There's no love like a mother's love in this world.

And the Lord Jesus tells us and the Bible tells us that God, in fact, tells us that so often the way he deals with us and his love to us is like the love of a mother.

For instance, he tells us in Nicaea, As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you. And that's exactly what our mothers have done for us and still do.

Because how many times has mum taken you? You've been hurt and cleans your cats and gives you a hug and dries your tears and tells you, look, it's all right, I'm here for you.

[9 : 16] That's what mothers do. Mothers love like nobody else in this world loves. And so the Lord says, that's a kind of love.

It's even, it's greater, but we can see a little of what God's love is like to us in the way that mothers care, the way that mothers will protect. Again, he says of the church that you're carried up on the

hip and bounced up on the knee.

Just a wee, wee child and you put on your knee and you bounce away. And it's like the Lord's care of us and it's love to us. Again, the Lord tells us in Nicaea, Can a mother forget her nursing child? And you'd say, that's impossible. Well, the Lord says, How much more can God, cannot forget his children? So you ask the Lord to look after you.

And the Lord loves to look after. You put your heart and your life into the hand of the Lord. And he will watch over you at all times. And he'll care for you and he'll protect you.

[10:23] And he'll tell you, he'll call you. And he'll be with you day and night. And when you wander away, that's his job is to, he goes to try and take you back.

And you know, the wonderful thing is, if we are with the Lord like that, living with him, trusting in him, there'll come a day in our lives when, as a good shepherd, he will call us home.

Just like the mum calls home for tea. Just like the mother sheep called these twins and said, Come on, where are you? Time to come home. Time for a drink. The Lord will one day call us when our time in this world is over.

And he's going to say, it's time to come home. And the wonderful thing is, he won't just leave us to make our own way home, because we can't. But he'll be there with us. And he will take us home to be forever with himself.

This is his wonderful love. I pray that you will know this love, and that I will know this love today and every day of our lives.

[11:31] Now we're going to say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Now we're going to read some verses from the Bible.

We're going to read from the book of Psalms, Psalm number 42. Psalm 42 in the book of Psalms. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, Where is your God?

These things I remember, as I pour out my soul, How I would go with a throng And lead them in procession to the house of God, With glad shouts and songs of praise, A multitude-keeping festival.

[12:44] Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, For I shall again praise him, My salvation and my God.

My soul is cast down within me, Therefore I remember you, From the land of Jordan, And of Hermon, From Mount Emizah. Deep calls to deep, At the roar of the waterfalls, All your breakers and your waves Are going over me.

By day the Lord commands His steadfast love, And at night His song is with me, A prayer to the God of my life. I say to God, my rock, Why have you forgotten me?

Why do I go mourning Because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a deadly wound in my bones, My adversaries taunt me, While they say to me all the day long, Where is your God?

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God, For I shall yet again praise him, My salvation, And my God.

[13:57] Amen, and may God bless to us This reading of his own holy word. So I want us to look at this psalm again, And just maybe to highlight Two or three verses.

In verse 2 it says, My soul thirsts for God, For the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night.

And then in verse 8 it says, By day the Lord commands a steadfast love, And at night his song is with me, A prayer to the God of my life.

The sense of the soul's longing for God is a theme that runs right throughout the Bible.

And it is something that every person who loves the Lord, They have this desire for the Lord. There is a thirst for God. A thirst for God.

[14:53] We find that expression so often in the Bible. Now this psalm, Psalm 42, is often looked at as a companion to Psalm 43. Whether they were written at the same time or not, I'm not altogether sure.

It would look like they were. But whether they were or whether they were not, They do go together very much. And they're psalms of extremes, Because they're looking at sometimes in that psalm,

There is a real sense of sorrow.
Other times there's a sense of song. Times there's real doubt. Other times there's devotion.
Sometimes there's real fear.
Other times there's faith. And that is so like us as Christians. That we are always up and down.
Life is like a roller coaster. Yes, when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, There is an underlying peace that will never be removed. There is a sense of identity that is always there.
[15 : 59] These things money can't buy. The world can't give. We can't work up in ourselves. They are realities that come by faith into our life. When we accept the Lord.

However, as we go through life, In our Christian experience, Some days our faith is vibrant. Other days it isn't. And sometimes we're given to fears.
To doubts. To uncertainties. Some days we have a tremendous devotion to the Lord. And other times we kind of cool off. We go through all these different and varied experiences.
And that's one of the most beautiful things about the book of Psalms. Is that it deals with the realities of life. It deals with Christian experience like nothing else. And I don't believe that you can go through the book of Psalms.
And not find a psalm. Or part of a psalm. That will echo with your own particular experience.
Whatever it is that you're going through. Because sometimes we find the psalm that's angry.
[17 : 00] Uncertain. Fearful. And they express things sometimes that we'd be hesitant to express. But it's all there. It's all there in the Psalms.

And that's why the Psalms are so, so precious. Because they deal with the realities of life. And of Christian experience. And of where we really are.
Now, in this Psalm. We find that there's all sorts of things that we've been saying. There's fear and hurt. And anger and anxiety.
And all these things. And the psalmist, you find that. Although he goes through all the turmoil that goes through in life. He finishes by saying.
Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God. For I shall again praise him. My salvation and my God.

[17 : 58] And you see. The Lord doesn't leave his people down in the dumps. We can go into the dumps. We can go into the places of uncertainty. But God won't leave us there. He'll take us out.

And we will praise him. That's one of the things that we will do. We will praise him. Even although there are times we are so oppressed. And times that we are so cast down.

Now, again. One of the things that this Psalm seems to. Kind of highlight. Is the self-pity of the psalmist. Because if you go through the psalm carefully.
You will notice how often he is using I. And me. And my. And the psalmist you would almost say. Has reached a place where he is wallowing in self-pity.
Now, don't get me wrong. There are times when we feel overwhelmed. And we really feel down. And self-pity can really become part of what's going on.

[18 : 57] But we need to watch. Because self-pity can really, really drag us down. And we can become overwhelmed by it. And it's like we begin to sink in a marsh. And so it's vital that we look up.

And we try and focus upon the Lord. Because if we don't. If we just keep looking at our problems. And looking at our troubles. And looking in on ourselves. We will keep going down.
That's why it's so important. That sometimes we have to force ourselves away. And get into God's word. And look at God in his word. To lift us up.

Because you'll notice that the psalmist. In verse 7. He's talking about being overwhelmed. And he says. Deep calls to deep. All the waves and breakers come over my head.
And the word deep there. Had a great sense of dread for the Jew. It was kind of riddled. As somebody was saying. Of mythological associations.

[19 : 58] And had a sense of. Primeval terror. And so. The psalmist is really in a bad place. He is really. Really troubled. And so.

He's got this sense of sorrow. After sorrow. Lashing over him. And he just feels that he's being submerged. By all this oppression. And sorrow.
And he's just. He's in a really bad place. And when you read this psalm. It brings you. To think of Jonah. Because Jonah. Jonah was expressing the very same thing.

Remember when Jonah was swallowed by the great fish. And when he was in the belly of the whale. And in Jonah chapter 2. We read in Jonah's prayer. The waters closed in over me. To take my life. The deep surrounded me. Weeds were wrapped around my head. What a terrible situation he was in. And when my life was fainting away.

[20 : 56] What did Jonah do? This is what he said. I remember the Lord. And my prayer came to you. Into the holy temple. Jonah.

Did exactly. What I was saying. What we should do. Jonah is not fearful predicament. He's sinking. And it would appear sinking without hope. Submerged.

The weeds. The seaweed. Everything. And there he's going down and down. Into death. To all. By all appearances. And then he says. I remember the Lord.

God. And even in the belly of the fish. He turned as it were. To God's holy temple. Where. What was. What did that signify? It signified the mercy seat.

And he's turning to the God of mercy. And he's saying to the God of mercy. Have mercy upon me. And remember God delights in mercy. And God did have mercy upon Jonah. And he delivered him.

[21 : 54] And in a sense. That's exactly what the psalmist has done here as well. Because he says in verse 8. That. By day the Lord commands a steadfast love.

And at night his song is with me. And so. The psalmist. Although he's overwhelmed. And he feels he's going down and down. Then he also turns.

To the Lord. And can I say to anybody today. If you're feeling yourself sinking in life. And it doesn't matter what situation you're in. Or what you're confronting in life.

Or what fears. Or what difficulties. Please go to the Lord. The Lord is waiting. To be gracious. The Lord is waiting for you. To call to him.

His ear is open to our cry. His hand is outstretched to you. Don't try and go on any longer on your own. Because the Lord is there. And he will hear you cry to him.

[22 : 55] Cry with an honest heart. Even if you've never cried before to the Lord. And you don't know how to. Just go. Just ask Lord. Help me. Lord be merciful to me.

And remember that the broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice. And so the psalmist says that God will command his steadfast love.

This is his covenant faithfulness. Where God's love and mercy and grace and kindness are all poured out upon the individual. And so that the relationship of course with the Lord is a covenant relationship.

Once you come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are in a covenant with God. And that means that our relationship is secure. It is guaranteed.

It is assured. It means it cannot be broken. Now the wonderful thing is that God's covenant relationship that we are in with him. In order that we are safe in him.

[23 : 56] That relationship wasn't made initially between himself and you and me. It was made God the Father made this covenant with God the Son.

And that's why it's secure. If it was between God and you and me. It couldn't be secure because we are anything but secure. We are so fickle and changeable.

But God the Son and God the Father are unchanging in their being. And so the security of our relationship is founded in that covenant between God the Father and God the Son.

And that's why God the Son did everything that was required of him. Why he left the realms of glory. Came down into this world. Came in our nature. Went to the cross.

And died as a sacrifice for our sins. Went under the power of death in order to beat death and to beat the grave. Rose again. Is ascended into heaven.

[24 : 57] Is interceding for us. And is going to come again to take his church home to be with himself forever. And when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

When we come to accept Jesus Christ. We enter in to that covenant relationship that has been made between Father and Son. And we are as safe as anything in this world.

There's nothing as safe as the security in Jesus Christ. And so the psalmist knowing the power of this relationship says. Command.

That God will command his steadfast love. There's no ifs or buts about it. Because of this covenant relationship. God is going to command. There's going to be a command. And so the psalmist knows that he's not going to stay in the dark.

He's not going to stay in the depths. That he's going to be lifted up. Now in verse 3 the psalmist talks about tears day and night. But when God commands.

[26 : 00] When God gives this command. You notice what it says in verse 8. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love. And at night his song is with me.

I love that. You and I know that worries can be intensified at night. You know you're worried about some. There's difficulties. There's troubles. You've had a hard day.

And you realise that. Whatever you're going through is not going to sort out tomorrow or the next day. It can be sorrows or sadnesses or troubles or whatever. You go to bed and you're waking in the night.

And these troubles are often far worse in the night. Because we can lie awake. Longing for the daylight. Because somehow it doesn't seem quite so bad in the daylight. But night that's a time of anxiety and trouble.

And the Lord is assuring us here through the psalmist. That there will be songs in the night. That that's what the Lord gives us. He gives a song in the night.

[27 : 03] Instead of the tears. A song in the night. And again how often we've seen that in the Bible. He can give that song. For instance. When a person comes to faith.

In Jesus Christ. And sometimes God works at us. Through the night. And maybe you're today a Christian. And you can remember how God was working at you through the night. When you'd waken in the night.

And you realised you weren't right with God. And maybe it was through the night. That you closed in with Christ. That's what happened to the Philippian jailer. But it was I remember at midnight.

When the earthquake came. In the prison in Philippi. And he thought all the prisoners had escaped. And he calls out. What must I do to be saved? Remember how Paul said to him.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And you shall be saved. And you know what happens when we are saved. And God gives us a song. Psalm 40 talks about that.

[28 : 00] That we're sinking in the mighty pit. We're just going down and down. But God comes and he hears our cry. And he lifts us up. And he puts our feet on a rock.

And he establishes our way. And he puts a new song in our mouth. Again sometimes God gives us a song. Like he did to Paul and Silas. In the prison that night.

Because remember what happened. They were there. They had been beaten up. They were in chains. Their feet held in stocks. And how do we find them? Praising God.

God gave them such a sense of his presence. And of his joy. That even although their backs are opened and bleeding. They can't but praise God. You see this is what God does.

There's the songs of the night. And again the darkest time in human experience. Is when we go down into death's dark veil. As we were looking at last week. But even there the shepherd is there with his light.

[28 : 58] And he will give us a song in the night of death. Where he will bring us and assure us of his presence and peace. And take us back to glory with himself.

But you'll also notice in this psalm. That the psalmist is somebody who is thirsting for God. For the living God. And he's expressing this thirst.

It's like a desperation for God. I really, really need to get to God. And you know this is one of the real marks of grace. Where we thirst for God.

It's an evidence that God's love is in you. And it's God who begins that. Because naturally we don't thirst after God. We're not really looking for God.

And even if we maybe believe in God. Or think about God. We're not thirsting after him. When you thirst you're longing for. If you're really thirsty. You're out in the moor or something.

[29 : 55] You say. Oh man I need a drink. Just give me. If I could even get a wee flowing stream. Something. I'm just so thirsty. And you begin to think about it all the time. And for the believer.

That's exactly what is happening. You have this thirst. You're thirsting for God. For God. The living God. And so. That's where we find the psalmist.

And. The Lord will give you this thirst too. You ask him. Lord give me this thirst. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. We're told that they will be satisfied. And so there's this growing desire.

You know. Today you might be saying to yourself. I don't know what's going on in my life. But I've started to get a desire for God. That I never had before.

Do you know what that is? That's God. God gives you that desire for himself. It's not something that you work up yourself. And God doesn't play games with us.

[30 : 58] When God begins to create a desire. For himself. It is in order that he will satisfy that desire. By giving himself to you. Through the Lord Jesus.

So you say to the Lord. Lord. I don't know what's going on. But please. Come close. Show yourself to me. Reveal yourself to me. I need you Lord.

But you'll notice that the psalmist. With this thirsting. That he's desiring. He's got this longing to get back to God's house. God's house is such an important part.

Of Christian life. Now I know that. I know there's many people who. Find it difficult to go to God's house. For differing reasons. Who do love the Lord. But. Normally it's our desire to be there.

Because God deals with us in his house. Sometimes we can go to God's house. And we have pride. And resentment. And anger. And bitterness. And lust. And all sort of things.

[31 : 56] And when we come under his word. Through the singing. The reading. The preaching of the word. God deals with us. Sometimes we come in. And our hearts are hard. God softens us.

Sometimes we come in. And we're filled with doubts. And God lifts us up. He encourages us.

Sometimes we're wondering what to do. And under his word. He directs us.

That's why God's house is so precious. We love the fellowship of God's people. And this is one of the things. That God's people just now are finding so hard. And difficult. Is not being able to get to God's house.

Because we love the company. The fellowship of God's people. And we love being in the presence of God. Because God has promised to be with us.

Where even two or three gather together. That he'll be there in the midst of place. But while the psalmist is looking back. Looking back to those times. When he was able to go with a crowd to God's house.

[32 : 56] Oh if only that could happen. We were looking like that as well. But the psalmist says. Why are you downcast? That's how he finishes it all off. And he says.

Hope in God. For I shall yet praise him. And that's. That's the beauty. The Christian is hope. And we believe that the Lord will. Once again restore.

So that we will be able to meet and to fellowship. And enjoy. Company with him. And with one another again. And I pray today that.

If any of you are in doubt. Or darkness. Or uncertainty. Or fear. That you will look to the God who is there. Who is able to do for you. And ask him.

Lord. Preach into my heart. Give me that thirst for yourself. And satisfy. That thirst. By giving yourself to me.

[33 : 51] Let us pray. Lord bless us we pray. We give thanks for your goodness to us. We give thanks for your word. And we pray that that word will stay with us. And that word will be a light.

And a lamp to our path. Bless our homes. Our families. And all whom we love. And cleanse us from our sin. We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Now we are going to sing in conclusion.

And our singings. As you will be aware. Our singings that have been. From the congregation. And obviously just tie in. To the service here.

So. We are going to sing from Psalm 84. And this of course is a psalm. Which is about God's house. And from verse 8. We are just going to sing the last four verses.

Verses 8 to the end. Lord God of hosts. My prayer here. O Jacob's God. Give ear. See God who's shield. And look on the face of thine anointed dear. For in thy courts.

[34 : 49] One day excels a thousand. Rather in my God's house. Will I keep a door. Than dwell in tents of sin. For God the Lord's. A sun and shield.

He'll grace and glory give. And will withhold no good from them. That uprightly to live. And so on. Psalm 84. From verse 8.

To the end. Lord God of hosts. My prayer here.

O check your socket here. As long as he will yours. We may leave.

■ long as song. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

[36 : 46] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS O Thine, that art, Thou Lord of hosts, Thine man is truly blessed, Who my assured confidence on me alone, Thou great.

Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you, now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.