

The Lord On His Throne

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[0 : 0 0] Well, church, please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Psalm chapter 11. Psalm chapter 11. We're continuing our summer series through the Psalms this morning, and we've made our way to the 11th chapter.

If you didn't bring your own Bible, that's okay. We have Bibles there in the seat backs and the chairs in front of you, and you're welcome to use those this morning. But we always do encourage you, if you would, have your Bibles open.

I want you to see it with your own eyes on the pages of God's Word. So Psalm chapter 11, and when you've found it, let's stand in honor of God's Word this morning. To the choir master of David, in the Lord I take refuge.

How can you say to my soul, flee like a bird to your mountain? For behold, the wicked bend the bow. They have fitted their arrow to the string, to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart.

If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes see.

[1 : 1 8] His eyelids test the children of man. The Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Let Him rain coals on the wicked. Fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous. He loves righteous deeds.

The upright shall behold His face. Let's pray once more. Lord, we pray now that you would speak clearly to us. Draw us to Christ this morning.

Remind us of the truths of your Word and of your reign and of your power. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. Like most kids, when I was growing up, one of my favorite things to do was to watch cartoons.

After a nice stressful week doing whatever it is a kid likes to do, Saturday morning would come around and I would pull up with a bowl of cereal and a pillow or two, lay out and be excited to watch my Saturday morning cartoons.

[2 : 2 9] And many of you, I'm sure, are familiar with the Sylvester and Tweety cartoons. This is black and white cat, Sylvester, who was trying and always failing, but always trying his best to get his hands on this little yellow bird named Tweety.

In every episode of Sylvester and Tweety, Sylvester, he was coming up with all sorts of new ideas, new ways to get his hands on Tweety. His intention was to get Tweety Bird and slide him in between two pieces of white bread and have Tweety for lunch.

But usually, Tweety would either outsmart him or outrun him. He would find some way to avoid getting caught. But every now and then, a third character would appear.

Hector the Bulldog. Hector the Bulldog. He was on Tweety's side. And so when Hector the Bulldog showed up, well, guess what? Tweety Bird, he didn't have to run.

He didn't have to fly. When Hector was there, Tweety got a whole lot more confident. Why? Because Hector was there to make certain that Sylvester did not do a thing to harm Tweety.

[3 : 42] Now, when I was a kid watching Sylvester and Tweety, I knew I was watching high-quality television, right? But what I did not know at the time was that watching this show was actually preparing my heart to better understand the message of Psalm chapter 11.

Because what we see here in Psalm chapter 11 is, yet again, the wicked are attacking. Yet again, the wicked are coming up with another scheme to try and get their hands on King David.

They want to do him harm. But in Psalm 11, instead of running, instead of flying away like a bird to the mountains, David stands firm.

Not because the threat is small, not because he is strong, but because he knows, he understands, he believes. The Lord is on his side.

This morning, what I want us to do is I want to see two reasons why the righteous should not fear the threats of the wicked. This is going to be our outline this morning.

[4 : 45] Two reasons why the righteous should not fear the threats of the wicked. Reason number one. First, we do not fear because the Lord is our refuge.

Point number one. We do not fear because the Lord is our refuge. Well, apparently, again, the wicked are at it again.

And it's as if David is either remembering or maybe he's imagining a conversation with somebody else who is filling David in on the threats against him.

And this unknown advisor is telling David how he thinks he ought to react to the threats of the wicked. And so he says, David, my advice to you is to run.

My advice to you is to flee, to run away, go hide. Why? Because what these wicked men are planning is an attack against David that is dangerous, destructive, and devastating to the king.

[5 : 50] And we're going to see all of this here in the psalm. He says that their attack is dangerous for King David. He says, verse 2, the wicked bend the bow. They have fitted their arrow to the string.

This is an image of a mighty hunter with a bow and an arrow. And the bow is bent, which means that arrow is ready to fly. They are intending to do some damage.

They've set the arrow and they're taking aim. And to this counselor's perspective, compared to the strength of the wicked, David is like a little bird. He's flying helplessly.

He's being hunted by the wicked. He's in danger. The wicked are armed and they're ready to attack. But not only are they dangerous, these wicked men are also destructive.

They have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart. Their intention is to destroy.

[6 : 48] It says they do their work in the dark. And we hear that language of darkness. Our minds ought to go to this connotation of wickedness and evil.

These are dark, evil deeds. They attack in the dark. Their ways are dark. They are children of darkness attacking the children of light.

Our boys recently got a bow and arrow. I have a friend who thought it would be a good idea for three boys to play with a bow and arrow.

So we have a few ground rules. For one, before that string is pulled and before that bow is bent, everybody else is now standing behind the person with a bow and arrow.

Right? That's common sense. But also, this isn't even a rule. It's also common sense. At least I think it should be. We don't go shoot the bow and arrow at night. Why?

[7 : 44] Because you have no idea where that arrow is going to fly. You let it go. You don't know if it's going to hit the church. You don't know if it's going to hit a power line. You don't know if it's going to hit the house.

You don't know what damage is going to do. Well, here David says, The wicked shoot in the dark. It's as if they can't even fully see clearly where they're aiming or who they're shooting or what damage is being done.

They just let the arrows fly. And this is reckless and destructive behavior. And ultimately, this counselor says that David needs to run because these attacks, if they land, if they're successful in what they're doing, these attacks are going to be devastating for King David.

He asks this question in verse 3. He says, If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Now, we don't know exactly what they were aiming at, what the attack was, but we know that their intention was to completely destroy the foundations of the righteous.

[8 : 57] So this could be an assault on David's character, trying to undermine the confidence of the people in King David. It could be an assault on the throne itself, trying to take away the throne.

Whatever it was, their aim, their intention, was to deal a devastating blow to the very foundations of the righteous. And this counselor says, If they succeed, if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

It's hopeless for you, David. You are better off to run away. Get out of there. Flee to the mountains. Save yourself. Run from the threats of the wicked. From his perspective, the wicked are unbeatable.

David's in a losing position. The righteous cannot win. Sometimes it feels like that, doesn't it? The world that we live in, it feels that way.

It feels like wicked people and all the forces of evil. It feels at times like their strength is insurmountable, is unconquerable, is unbeatable.

[10 : 04] And so all the righteous people, all that they have to do, is hide. Run away. Flee. But look how David responds.

Verse 1. In the Lord I take refuge. How can you say to my soul, flee like a bird to your mountain?

The Lord is my refuge. David is not unaware of the danger. He's no fool. He sees the strength of the wicked, but he looks it in the eye.

And he says, I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going anywhere. Why? Because I'm strong? Because I'm capable? Because the threat is small? Because the threat is insignificant? No. Because the Lord is my refuge.

This is similar to what Psalm 46 says. You can flip there if you'd like, or mark it for later. One of my favorite Psalms, Psalm 46, says, God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

[11 : 10] Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

I mean, just picture that scene. Imagine it in your mind. The earth is shaking. The whole earth is giving way. The mountains are crumbling. The waters are raging. The mountains are moving into the heart of the sea.

This is a picture of chaos and destruction all over the entire globe, but in the midst of it, the psalmist says, we won't fear. Why?

Because God is our refuge. This is the secret to Christian boldness.

You want to know what it means to be bold? You want to know why Christians are bold in the face of danger? Would you like to grow in boldness?

[12 : 12] Here's the secret. Okay? Here's the secret. Christians are bold in the face of the wicked because we take refuge in the Lord. Something you should know about Christians is that Christians are bold.

We don't run away from hard things. Often, in fact, Christians are known to run to hard things. Not recklessly like the wicked, but confidently and boldly.

We don't just run and flee at the first sight of danger to go make our lives more comfortable and more safe. Christians are bold, even against the strongest attacks of the enemy, not because we're strong, not because the attacks are small, but because we believe God is strong.

God is capable. God is powerful. And we take refuge in Him. This is the secret. We're just saying, a mighty fortress is our God.

Did we sing it? A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing, our helper. He amidst the flood of mortal ills prevailing. You know, King David knew this better than anybody, didn't he?

[13 : 22] This is the same man who, as a young man, as a child, stood before Goliath, a seemingly insurmountable, wicked man, an undefeatable Philistine, almost 10 feet tall, stood in front of him with nothing but a sling and a couple of stones, and faced him, looked him dead in the eye, and said, we're not going anywhere.

And to those who looked, they had to wonder, what is the secret to David's boldness? Well, listen, he said, you come to me with a sword, and a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

His secret was that he took refuge in the Lord. I shared the story last week with you of the three missionaries who were murdered in Haiti.

One minute, they're coming out of the church building, ministering to children. The very next minute, they're captured by a gang, and robbed, and beaten, and eventually shot from the eyes of the world.

This looks like foolishness, but we know better. They weren't oblivious to the dangers around them. They went there fully aware that this exact scenario was a possible ending to their time in Haiti.

[14 : 44] So why did they go? They went, because to them, the threats of wicked men did not outweigh the presence and the power of God, and the call of God on their life.

They took refuge in the Lord. They believed the promise of Christ. Whoever desires to save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

They believed the word of Hebrews 13, 6. He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper. I will not fear.

What can man do to me? This is the secret of Christian boldness. The righteous are bold in the face of danger because we take refuge in the Lord.

So the question for us then, do you share that boldness? Do you share this boldness? If you find yourself looking out at the world as wicked as it is, if you find yourself trembling or fearful, if you find yourself feeling afraid of what might happen, what others might do to you, what others might say about you or to you, if you go and speak the name of Christ, if you find yourself fearful, the secret to boldness.

[16 : 15] It's not your strength. Take refuge in the Lord. Now, it's easy to say, isn't it? But you might be wondering, well, what is it about the Lord that makes him such a place of safety?

What is it about the Lord that makes him a refuge for those who rely on him and trust in him? Well, we see this answer in our second point this morning's second. We do not fear because the Lord is our righteous ruler.

We do not fear because the Lord is our righteous ruler. David, he's confident, he's bold because of where God is and who God is.

You see that? Where is he? The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. He's reigning in heaven. David's confidence is that God is king over all the earth.

He's reigning from his holy throne up in heaven. He's reigning and ruling over all things. And even more than this, this sovereign king who's reigning over all things has taken it upon himself to make promises to David.

[17 : 34] You remember, God has anointed David king. David was God's choice. God's anointed king. God had raised him up to be his anointed ruler over his people.

And God, the king, had promised David, 2 Samuel 7, that from his own line would come another king who would reign forever, whose kingdom would have no end.

God himself, the king, the sovereign king, out of his own initiative, had linked himself up to David. By God's grace, David's good and God's glory are now intertwined.

They're bound up together. And so because of this, David knows, listen to this, because David is God's anointed king, David knew that all of his enemies ultimately were God's enemies.

David knew that any threat against him, any work against his life, any opposition to him is ultimately threats against the Lord.

[18 : 44] And so he entrusts himself to the Lord to deal with it. Psalm chapter 2. Psalm chapter 2. You remember Psalm chapter 2.

Psalm 1 and 2. They set the stage for the whole rest of the book of Psalms and asked this question. Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his... What? Help me. And his anointed saying, let us burst their bonds apart and cast their cords away from us.

What's God's response to this? Verse 4. Psalm chapter 2. He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision.

Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, as for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

[19 : 48] And do you remember how it ends? Verse 10. It says, Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

David, the anointed king. He rests in the sovereign reign of God and the promises that He has made. David's throne is under attack, but he rests in the truth that God's, the Lord's throne is in heaven, unbothered by the threats of man.

David also knows that just because the Lord is in heaven, just because He's up there reigning and ruling, that doesn't mean that He's unaware of what's going on here on earth.

Quite the opposite. In fact, because God is completely sovereign over everyone and everything, because of the unique vantage point that He alone has from His throne in heaven, He is totally aware of what happens in every corner of His domain.

[21 : 07] David knows that the Lord is on His throne and He sees the righteous under attack. The Lord is on His throne and He sees the wicked bringing the attack on the righteous.

Because of who He is, a righteous king, David finds boldness and comfort. He says in verse 4, the Lord's eyes, His eyes see.

His eyelids test the children of man. And He sees David and his struggle and He sees the wicked and their threats. As we saw last week from chapter 10, it may not always seem like the Lord sees what's going on here in this world, but we trust the Lord does see and the Lord will take it into His own hands.

The wicked can't even see the impact of their arrows shooting in the dark, but the Lord is far more aware of the damage they do even more than they are. and the Lord has two very different responses to the righteous and to the wicked.

Verse 5, look there with me. He says, the Lord tests the righteous, but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

[22 : 28] David knows that for the righteous, for the righteous, trials like this are simply tests. The Lord tests the righteous, he says in verse 5.

If you are a Christian, if you are suffering some trial, if you're enduring some pain or some persecution or some hardship, we rejoice to know that because God is king and God is good, that He's a righteous ruler, that what man means for evil, God means for good.

The wicked want to destroy you, but God intends to refine you. We've seen enough of God's word at this point to know God never, ever, ever, ever, ever promises that His people will not receive threats, will not be hated, will not endure violence or suffering.

He doesn't promise us that we won't be dragged away from our church when we go serve Him in Haiti, but He promises that He has good purpose in every trial that His people face.

Hebrews 12, verse 6, the Lord disciplines the one He loves and chastises every son whom He receives like a good father.

[23 : 49] He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness. So James, it tells us to count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

We can endure threats and temptation and trials of all kinds with boldness and with joy because we know that in the end the Lord means it for His glory and for our good.

What does Romans 8 say? All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose, but for the wicked and for those who do not know the Lord.

For the wicked, on the other hand, the end result is very different. We need to understand this. Look again there to verse 5 one more time. He says, the Lord tests the righteous but His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

His soul hates the wicked. We don't like that language, do we? This is uncomfortable language, isn't it?

[25 : 07] This is hard for us to understand. We're not comfortable with this sort of talk. The Lord hates the wicked and in some ways if we're not careful, we can find ourselves explaining it away.

Well, God doesn't really hate the wicked. That's not true or the God that I love, He worshiped, the God that I worship loves everyone the same. He doesn't hate anyone.

He loves everybody equally and I understand the impulse to say those things but I want to offer just a word of caution. We have to be careful that we don't explain away what God's word clearly says, verse 5, or that we don't explain it away where we make ourselves seem more compassionate and more kind than God Himself.

If that were possible, it's not. So how do we think about this? Well, in one sense, yes, in a general way, the Lord does show love to everyone.

He extends common grace to everyone. The sun shines on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. The wicked and the righteous both experience joy and happiness and eat good food and enjoy all sorts of pleasures in this life.

[26 : 21] These are all good gifts of God to everyone. He has a sort of general love for all of His creatures and in another all-important sense, all of the incredible riches of God's love are extended to all wicked men in Christ.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son. That's an act of love. God shows His love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5a, that's an act of love. In the gospel, we see a wide invitation for wicked men, for sinners, to enter into the love of God through Jesus Christ.

But at the same time, in a way that we don't quite understand, partly because it makes us uncomfortable to try and understand it, verse 5 says, God has hatred in His soul for the wicked and the one who loves violence.

This is not an emotional response on God's part. It is positional. Positional.

[27 : 41] The wicked, those who are in sin, are positionally under the wrath of God. They are positionally objects of His wrath.

There are only two types of people in the world. The Psalms make this very clear to us. There's the wicked and there's the righteous. We are none of us, 50-50. None of us are a composite. We are either positionally wicked or we are positionally righteous.

There is no middle ground. Those who are beloved of God and those who are hated of God. The righteous are loved by God.

The wicked are hated by God. Jacob, I loved. Esau, I hated. The righteous are destined for eternal life in Christ. The wicked are destined for eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord.

God is in a position of favor and love towards the righteous. And God is in a position of wrath and destruction towards the unrighteous. He is for the righteous.

[28 : 45] He is against the unrighteous. This is uncomfortable. But unless we get this, we'll never understand why David can pray the way he does. Verse 6, Let him rain coals on the wicked.

Fire and sulfur and scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. How can he say something so cruel? Again, he prays like this because he knows his enemies are God's enemies.

So he prays the wrath of God against his enemies. Here's the thing. David deeply believed something about God that we tend to struggle to understand.

David took comfort in God's holiness. His holiness. Where is he? He is reigning in heaven, but also who is he?

Verse 7, The Lord is righteous. And what does he love? He loves righteous deeds. He is righteous.

[29 : 57] He hates the wicked and those who love evil.

Psalms 97, it says, righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. This is who he is. He is holy. Holy. That's a word that we are familiar with.

We hear it often. We sing, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty. But I think it's also a concept that we struggle to fully understand. So here's a definition.

Richard Lentz says, the holiness of God refers to the absolute moral purity of God and the absolute moral distance between God and his human creatures.

Let me say that again. Richard Lentz definition of holiness. The holiness of God refers to the absolute moral purity of God and the absolute moral distance between God and his human creatures.

[31 : 10] 1 John 1 5 says, God is light in him. There is no darkness at all. This is absolute, total, perfect purity.

God is holy. In the second part of Mr. Lentz's definition, we are not. There's a distance here. It's impossible to bridge this gap.

God is holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, and we are not. We can't even fully comprehend holiness because there's nothing in our life or experience that comes close to God's purity.

And so what happens is you and I, we evaluate things on a scale of good, better, best. I'm not as bad as this guy, or the thing I did is not as bad as what she did.

But if we understand that God is holy, we have to understand that God is not on the scale and God does not judge on the scale.

[32 : 17] God is holy and the standard, the rubric by which he evaluates everyone and everything is not on a scale of good, better, best. He judges everyone and everything by his own standard of perfect holiness.

holiness. If this judgment on the wicked seems harsh to us, it's probably because in some way we've either minimized our wickedness or we've minimized his holiness.

Possibly both. What we need to understand is that God is king, that God is holy, that God is against the wicked, and that all of us naturally left to ourselves are wicked.

And we read these Psalms and we hear about the righteous and we hear about the wicked. We have to understand that naturally left to ourselves, we are not the righteous. We are the wicked.

wicked. Every one of us has raged against the Lord and his anointed. It doesn't matter if you're a convict, a criminal, or if you've simply disobeyed your parents even one time.

[33 : 41] R.C. Sproul in his book, The Holiness of God, that ought to be, by the way, required reading for every Christian. He says that every sin, every sin, is an act of cosmic treason, a futile attempt to dethrone God in his sovereign authority.

How do you think God the king will handle that sort of rebellion? We have to understand that the punishment fits the crime, right?

We understand that. The punishment fits the crime. The punishment correlates not just to the severity of our crime, but also to the significance of the one we have offended.

Think about it. If you kick your brother, that doesn't happen in my house or anybody else's house, I'm sure. You kick your brother, you get in trouble. You kick your mom, you ought to get in more trouble.

Not because the action is different, but because the recipient of the action is more significant. If you somehow walk up to the president and have access to the president and you kick the president, guess what?

[34 : 56] You're going to get in a lot of trouble. And what do you think will happen if you spit in the face of the king of kings who created you for his glory, who's given you every opportunity to repent and to turn to him with love and adoration and honor and worship as he deserves, that you have spurned the one who is worthy of all honor and praise and chosen instead to worship and serve yourself?

So what then is our hope? How in the world does this give us any confidence? How in the world do we make certain that we are not under his hatred but in his love?

Well, this is where we'll close church. The righteous are fearless, not because of our strength, not because the threat against us is small, but because we take refuge in Jesus Christ, who is our righteous ruler.

King Jesus is the true anointed king. Jesus Christ is the true eternal ruler of all of God's people.

Jesus Christ is the righteous man, none other. Jesus Christ is the promised son of David, who like David, faced wicked accusations and threats against his life, but who did not run from his accusers, who went to a familiar place to pray, knowing he would be betrayed, who like a lamb before his shears was silent as he made his way to the cross.

[36 : 43] Why? To make wicked people righteous in the sight of God. By his own life, death, and resurrection. Christ the King is the true righteous ruler of all, and we, the wicked, are made righteous by faith in him.

The only way you can read this psalm and put yourself in the category of righteous is if you are counted righteous in him.

There is no other way. The gospel is the unthinkable good news that God made his beloved son the object of his hatred so that wicked people like us might become the objects of his love.

love. We ought to marvel at this, church. We ought not say, I deserve to be loved by God.

You don't. You and I deserve the wrath of God. But by his grace alone, he has loved us in Christ and has rescued us from this domain of darkness by his own blood and he has adopted us into his own family, brought us into his love as his own sons and daughters and given us an unshakable rock solid hope that transforms every circumstance we face in this life.

[38 : 20] What can the wicked do to you in Christ? Christ. If God is for us, who can be against us? The devil and all of hell cannot take you away from the reign and rule of Christ.

This is good news for us, church. If you have not yet submitted yourself to the Lord and repented of your sin, all of us are guilty.

If you've not yet repented of your sin and bent the knee and bowed your heart to King Jesus, what stops you from doing so now? And if you have trusted in this good and holy King, listen to this, the blessing of his reign in your life is not just escape from danger, as wonderful as that is, it's the gift of an unbelievable, unshakable hope that no threat, no danger, no trial, no enemy can ever take away from you.

And this is where David closes this psalm. Look there. The Lord is righteous. He loves righteous deeds. And the upright shall behold his face.

The righteous have nothing to fear. We have nothing to lose. And we have all of eternity beholding the glory of God to look forward to.

[39 : 48] does that not make you bold in this life, church? So I'll close again as we did last week with this vision of our future hope.

When the Lord returns from Revelation 21 and 22, when the Lord returns, Revelation 21 verse 27 says, nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, no wicked person, no wicked thing, no threat, no danger, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Chapter 22 verse 3, no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him.

They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Let's pray. Lord, what a gift, what a gift to know that we who are wicked might be cleansed, freed from our wickedness, forgiven fully, not by our strength, but by your grace, God, and adopted as your sons and daughters, and given this unshakable hope of a future, looking into your face and worshiping you for the rest of eternity.

[41 : 25] We praise you, God, for the gospel. We praise you, God, for the life and death and resurrection of Christ. We praise you, God, that you are a good and a just and a holy God, and you will accomplish all your purposes.

Jesus, we thank you and we praise you for all this in Jesus' name. Amen.