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Preacher: Mike Plewniak

[0 : 00] For His steadfast love endures forever.

Let Israel say, His steadfast love endures forever! Let the house of Aaron say, His steadfast love endures forever. Let those who fear the Lord say, His steadfast love endures forever.

Out of my distress I called on the Lord. The Lord answered me and set me free. The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me?

The Lord is on my side as my helper. I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. All nations surrounded me. In the name of the Lord I cut them off. They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side.

[1 : 13] In the name of the Lord I cut them off. They surrounded me like bees. They went out like a fire among thorns. In the name of the Lord I cut them off.

I was pushed hard so that I was falling. But the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

The right hand of the Lord exalts. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. I shall not die, but I shall live. And recount the deeds of the Lord.

Verse 18. The Lord has disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death. Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

[2 : 12] This is the gate of the Lord. The righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we pray, O Lord.

O Lord, we pray, give us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God.

And He has made His light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords up to the horns of the altar. You are my God and I will give thanks to you.

You are my God. I will extol you. O give thanks to the Lord for He is good. For His steadfast love endures forever.

[3 : 14] Amen. God alone can save those who call on Him. And those who are saved by God continually give thanks to Him.

One of my favorite Christmas stories, you might have heard about this, is the Silent Night story from World War I. It's called the Silent Night because it was a spontaneous truce, a moment of peace between German and French soldiers on Christmas Eve, 1914, all along the Western Front.

And it was unplanned. It started when the German troops began to put up small Christmas trees around their trenches and they lit it with candles and the German troops began to sing these Christmas carols.

And on the other side of the field, you had these French with some English mixed in and they heard these Christmas carols, but not understanding the language. They knew the tunes.

And so they, on the other side of the field, began singing back to them in French and English, the same Christmas carols in their language. And all of a sudden, they began putting up these signboards, calling for a truce and calling for peace.

[4 : 25] And the soldiers came out on Christmas Eve and met in the middle of the field. This is during World War I, came out and met in the middle of the field and began to give each other

presents and candy and gifts and chocolate and postcards and the exchange presents.

A spontaneous game of soccer broke out. They're playing soccer against each other. And this spontaneous truce break out. It's a Christmas miracle is what people like to call it. And there's books and movies about it.

But what grips me about the story is not the peace that spontaneously broke out on Christmas Eve. It's that the next day, these same men began fighting each other again, trying to take each other's lives.

And actually, when their commanding officers found out what had happened, they were furious with them. And for the rest of the war, for five more years, every year on Christmas Eve, they commanded that they bombard each other and shoot at each other because they didn't want a truce like this to break out again.

It was this momentary peace that was so glorious and encouraging, yet that wasn't the end of the story. The war broke out again. There was a greater peace to come at the end of the war in 1918, which again wasn't a final peace as we know the story continues.

[5 : 42] This psalm is similar to this in that it speaks of a battle, of nations surrounding Him. It speaks of deliverance, of this peace that comes.

And it glorifies God for this peace that comes to the psalmist, and yet it points forward for us to a much greater peace, an eternal peace. It tells about a Christ who is to come, who will bring a peace for all time, an end to all wars, and a greater peace to us, the ones who battle with our sinful natures.

We're going to see from Psalm 118 that God alone can save those who call on Him. God alone is the one who saves. And we're going to look at this psalm through two points. The first point is this momentary salvation from enemies, which is kind of the context and the content of Psalm 118. It's this momentary salvation. This psalm begins with a call to worship in verses 1-4, where it has this refrain over and over. His steadfast love endures forever.

And it's going to end in verse 29 with the same refrain. His steadfast love endures forever. In the middle of the psalm is going to talk about why he's calling the people to praise God's steadfast love.

[7 : 03] Look at verse 5. A psalmist says that he was in distress. He's in trouble. Verses 10-13, he begins to describe this trouble.

He says that in verse 10, the nations surrounded him. In verse 11, he was surrounded on every side. In verse 12, it was like bees when you set thorns on fire.

It's like these enemies and nations are coming around him like bees swarming around him. Has anyone ever been attacked by a swarm of bees? I have.

When I was about 11 years old. When I was a kid, what we did all summer long is we played wiffle ball every day of the week. All summer. One of the problems was we weren't very good, so we would hit all of our wiffle balls onto the roof of our house.

And then my older brother, when you ran out of wiffle balls, somebody had to go up on the roof to retrieve the wiffle balls, and I was always the one nominated to scurry up onto the roof and get the wiffle balls. And one day, I scurried up this little vine up the side of our house, climbed up onto the roof, was getting a wiffle ball, when to my surprise, I was attacked by a swarm of bees.

[8 : 12] Now, I was on a roof of a house. There was no escape. There was nowhere to go. My sister is downstairs. My brother is downstairs. And I just, bees were all over me, attacking me from every side.

I don't know how this happened, but I just started running, and I just long jumped it off the roof. There was two sides to my house. One side went down, and it was a driveway that was concrete. The other side kind of went up and was grass. I don't know how I chose the right side, but I went towards the grass. But all my sister heard was screaming and footsteps and my body flying through the air.

But that's what the psalmist is saying. He's just on every side. He's attacked. There's nowhere to go. There's nowhere to run. There's nowhere to hide. Nations are surrounding him. There was no escape.

That's what he wants you to know. There's no escape, and there's only one thing he knew to do. Call on the Lord. I'm trapped. I'm surrounded. I have nowhere to go. Call on the name of the Lord.

[9 : 09] That's all he knew how to do. And that's what he says in verse 5. Out of my distress, I called on the Lord. If you ever reach a moment when you don't know what to do, and you feel

without hope and without help, when you run out of options, you can call on the name of the Lord. He hears your cry. Now, so often for me, I wait until that moment. My first misstep so often is, you know, when the first step determines the direction that you are going to go.

If you get on the interstate, you know, you can go north or south, and whichever way you go determines which direction you are heading. So often my misstep is, I trust in myself first.

My first step is so often to try to figure out a solution, to begin to think through, here are all my options. I'm stuck. I'm in trouble. Something has happened. And I begin thinking, how am I going to fix this?

How am I going to solve this? It's an expression of my self-sufficiency. I begin to make an action list of all the things I'm going to do to fix the problem. It's a misstep because I'm trusting in myself rather than trusting in God.

[10:23] And the psalmist says to me as I read this, it says, we have a God who wants to help us, who's on our side, who hears our cries, and we are in trouble. We call to Him and He answers and He acts and He has power and He's available to us.

We see that in the psalm when He cries out to God for deliverance. God hears Him and answers and acts on His behalf. In every single line, He's emphasizing this was not His doing.

It was God who delivered Him. He says, the Lord is my helper. The Lord was on my side. The Lord heard my cry and answered me. And He set me free.

And in verse 14, this is His proclamation to us. Look at verse 14 with me. He says, the Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. This is not an original line of His. The psalmist steals these verses straight from Exodus 15-2, the song of Moses.

[11:32] You may remember the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt. Moses wrote this line, the exact same line we read in verse 14 of Psalm 118.

Moses wrote this line after God delivered them from Pharaoh. God delivered them from slavery when they were trapped. Remember this moment when God sets them free and they leave and they're leaving Egypt.

And they come up against the Red Sea and they have Pharaoh's army on this side, the sea on this side. And they cry out to God and God parts the sea. They pass through. Pharaoh chases Him. It crushes their enemies. And on the other side of the sea, Moses sings this song. He says, the Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.

And Exodus in the Old Testament is kind of the benchmark of salvation. When you think about God delivering the Israelites out of Egypt, it's kind of the benchmark moment for the people of Israel.

[12:32] And the psalmist in 118 is in a similar place where he was surrounded on every side. There was no escape. He cries out to God and God delivered him through these enemies.

And as he's on the other side, he says the same thing. This is kind of the psalmist's Exodus moment. When's your Exodus moment? When have you been stuck and trapped and had nowhere to go and you cried out to God and He heard your cry?

Because when he does that, we say with the psalmist and with Moses, the Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. When I read that, I distinctly remember my Exodus moment.

When God delivered me from my sins. I was a freshman at the University of Tennessee. I was lost in every sense of the word.

I'd grown up going to church, but I did not know God. I did not know the gospel. I had not repented of my sins. And so I was several months into college life. And doing everything I thought college was supposed to be.

[13:41] Partying. And I had these friends. And I remember one night when I was out till 2 or 3 in the morning. And you would have thought this night is the climax of the college experience.

And I got back to my dorm room. And I was miserable and lonely. I felt so, I remember the feeling so alone. And it was distinct in my mind.

Sin is not delivering as advertised. And I remember all I knew to do. I didn't know what to do. I thought maybe I'll move back home. I started plotting out what am I going to do.

This is miserable. All I knew to do was to call out to God. And I just was crying to Him in the night. In my bed. In my dorm room. Lord, I'm miserable.

I need help. And God answered my cry by sending me to a Bible study in my dorm. Where a guy preached the gospel of Christ to me. And when I heard the good news of Jesus died for my sins. [14:37] And I can be reconciled to my God. He saved me. He became my salvation. It was my exodus moment. Maybe the answer to your cry is God has brought you here this morning to Trinity Grace Church.

Maybe He's answered your cry and brought you here to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. And He wants you to know that He alone, God alone, can save those who call on Him. If you call on Him, He hears you and He will answer you. He will deliver you from your troubles and from your sin. He hears your cry.

And He cares. He is your helper. He is on your side. He will answer your cry. And there's a progression here in Psalm 118 that you will find true in your life as well.

The psalmist is in trouble. He's beyond the help of any man. He cries out to God. God delivers him. And then he begins to praise God.

[15:42] And he calls the people to praise Him as well. And there's a pattern we always see in Scripture. We're in trouble. We cry out to God. He delivers us. And then we glorify Him.

That's the pattern. He gets the glory. Glory. Something about these moments. If you look at verses 15-16. After God delivers him, it says, glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous. And then he begins to cry out. This is what they're singing. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. The right hand of the Lord exalts. The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. They're singing these praises to God.

That's the response when God delivers us. He gets all the glory. One of my favorite things about Christmas is all these songs we sing together.

Don't you just love these Christmas carols that people have been singing over and over. And everybody knows the words. And there's just something about Christmas songs, you know. In our house, it's like we have the playlist ready to go.

[16:49] And we're just waiting. When can I push the button? When can I start Christmas songs? I can't wait, you know. It's like people, it's Thanksgiving today. Can we start earlier? Can we go earlier? I think in our house it starts in July.

We start playing Christmas music. There's something about Christmas songs. And it makes sense. Because God has become man. Born of a virgin. Born in Bethlehem. The city of David.

Fulfilling all the prophecies and the promises of God. And when we think about what God has done to save us. By sending His own Son in the flesh. To live like us.

To die for us. To be raised again. And it makes us want to sing. It's the right response. You may or may not know this. But you have a pastor who loves to sing.

Trust me. I was two offices down from him for ten years. You always knew when Walt got to the office. Because loud songs of singing came out.

[17:46] He loves to sing. Those who have been saved. Sing about it. I think it's a mark of Trinity Grace Church. You are singers.

Because God has delivered you. And the right response is to sing. It's what we're doing this morning. When we come together. And our voices join together. We're all singing. God has saved us.

God is the strength in our song. God has become our salvation. There's something about singing. That's the right response to what God has done for us. This section is really the heart of the psalm. But there's a second point. So the psalmist is talking about his deliverance. His exodus moment. He's calling the people to sing. But there's a second aspect to Psalm 118.

It's what it's pointing forward towards. Which is point number two this morning. If you're taking notes. And that is this eternal salvation from our greatest enemy.

[18:45] So Psalm 118 is in this context of this deliverance. And this exodus moment. And yet it has this echo that is pointing forward. Towards a greater peace.

A greater deliverance. They have this battle. And God delivers them. And they're singing in the camp. And in verses 19 through 27. We see a procession after this battle.

It's a victor's welcome back into Jerusalem. The soldiers as God has delivered them and rescued them. Are led back into Jerusalem to these cheers.

So the king is leading the way. They were surrounded. God delivered them. They're entering back in. The people are singing. There is this victory procession going on here. And it points forward.

Towards this ultimate fulfillment. Of the procession in the Christ. Christ. This psalm became a psalm about the Christ. Throughout the years of Jewish history.

[19 : 43] They would sing this psalm in anticipation. Of a king who was to come. One who would lead them to victory. A king who would deliver them. And lead them. And so it's a psalm of anticipation.

It really fits well with Advent. Because they're anticipating. A king is going to come. A king is going to come. He's going to lead us. He's going to deliver us. The victory is coming. For the Jewish people.

God has promised the king to come. And they would sing Psalm 118. This procession of victory for his Christ. Who's going to come.

And so it makes sense when we realize. That these are the verses. Recited by the crowds. When Jesus entered Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday.

Remember that moment. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem. On the donkey. This is what it says in Matthew 21. Verses 8 through 11. I think we have this for you. It says.

[20 : 41] Most of the crowd spread their cloaks. On the road. And others cut branches from the trees. And spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him. And that followed him. Were shouting.

Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes. In the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. And we see people lining the roads of Jerusalem.

Just like Psalm 118. And here's their king coming into Jerusalem. And so they're quoting Psalm 118. You know. They had heard about Jesus.

Of his miracles. Of the blind seeing. The lame walking. Dead raised to life. His fame had spread. The things that he was doing. And they were sitting there thinking. Here comes our king.

Entering into Jerusalem. He's going to deliver us. This is our new exodus moment. And so they're crying out to him. Blessed is he who comes.

[21 : 41] In the name of the Lord. It's a possession of victory. It's a deliverance from oppressors. Israel in Psalm 118. Was surrounded on all sides. Israel in the gospels.

Is surrounded on all sides. By the Roman rulers. They are surrounded. They are oppressed. They're crying out for deliverance. Hosanna is the Hebrew expression.

For save us we pray. From verse 25 in our text. And then they specifically quote. Verse 26. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

They are thinking Jesus. Is the fulfillment of this psalm for them. So just imagine. Imagine the shock.

As they saw the one they were hoping would be on the throne as king. Hanging on a Roman cross. What a drastic change in one week.

[22 : 41] The beginning of the week. They're lining the roads. Singing Psalm 118. Here is our deliverer. Here is our king. Here is what we've been anticipating. For hundreds and hundreds of years.

And then just days later. There he is hanging on a cross. Tortured and beaten and mocked. And I just picture the crowds returning to their homes.

Filled with despair. Disappointment. Their hopes shattered. I think they missed verse 22 of our text. This says the stone that the builders rejected. Has become the cornerstone. They didn't understand what it meant to be the Christ.

They understood the victory of the Christ. But they didn't understand the suffering that Isaiah 53 pointed towards. That victory would come. But not the way they thought it would come.

[23 : 40] Jesus knew as he was entering in this procession into Jerusalem. What it meant that he was the Christ. And he tried to prepare his disciples. Matthew informs us that at the Last Supper.

The night before Jesus' death. As they celebrated the Passover. That afterwards Jesus and his disciples sang hymns together. And the tradition was to sing Psalm 113 and 114.

Before the Passover meal. And Psalms 115 through 118. After the Passover meal. So it's even more significant. I mean he enters into Jerusalem.

They're singing Psalm 118. But think about this. The last night before Jesus is crucified. He's with his disciples. And probably he's singing Psalm 118.

This song with them. A song of deliverance. A song of this king entering into Jerusalem. And we just see Jesus. Sitting around with his disciples.

[24 : 41] Instituting communion. Breaking the bread. Pouring out the wine. Communicating to his disciples. This is what's going to happen to me. My body broken.

My blood shed. It was the last moment. Jesus preparing his disciples. And then they sing Psalm 118 together from memory. A psalm of victory.

Of deliverance from enemies. Why a victory psalm? Before the cross. Just think about that. Before entering into Gethsemane.

Before his arrest. Before the trial. Before being deserted by his disciples. Before the beatings.

Before the long walk to Golgotha. Before the nails and the hammer.

Before the crown of thorns. Before the agony of my God. My God. Why have you forsaken me?

Before all that which is set before him.

[25 : 39] In the next 24 hours. We find Jesus and his disciples. Singing a psalm of victory. Singing. His steadfast love endures forever.

Singing. Verse 6. The Lord is on my side. I will not fear. What can man do to me? Singing. Verse

14. The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.

Singing. Verse 17. I shall not die. But I shall live. And recount the deeds of the Lord. Just imagine.

The night he's going to be arrested.

And beaten. Jesus singing. This is the day the Lord has made. I will rejoice. And be glad in it.

Singing of victory.

Before he would be crushed. Singing of deliverance. Before his death. Singing a procession. Of victory. The night before. His procession. Through Jerusalem. Carrying a cross.

[26 : 36] Jesus knew. What the crowds didn't understand yet. And what he knew. Was that it was through the cross.

That victory was being purchased. For all time. For the people of God. This is a psalm of victory.

This was a day of victory. But not the way they thought.

Not momentary victory. Not victory over the Romans. Who were oppressing them. But victory for all time. Against our greatest enemy. Which is sin.

Inside of us. Jesus was going in. Not to battle the Romans. But to battle Satan. To battle our sin. To help us be reconciled.

To our God. That's the real victory. That's what the psalm. Is pointing forward towards. Towards a day. When this eternal peace. With God. Is bought.

[27 : 29] By our King. Jesus Christ. But the way it was purchased. Was not through him conquering. The Romans. But conquering our sin. By burying it in his body.

On the tree. For all time. That's what we celebrate. When we celebrate Christmas. That this. God become man.

Became man to die for us. Born to die. To set his people free. And though he himself. Was without sin.

He took God's wrath. Upon himself. So that our sins. Could be forgiven. By a holy God. He came. To set us free.

And so this psalm. Points. Towards this day. Where we can sing. God alone. Can save those. Who call on him. And we see that through Christ.

[28 : 25] We can be saved. And God did this. By sending his own son. To die for us. In the real procession. You know why Jesus. Could sing.

I shall not die. But I shall live. And recount the deeds of the Lord. Because he knew. That the real procession of victory. Was three days after the cross. Wasn't it? When he rose from the dead.

That was the procession of victory. That's when it began. And his disciples saw. What he meant.

That he would die. For their sins. One of my favorite songs.

To sing at Christmas time. Is Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Glory to the newborn king. Peace on earth.

And mercy mild. God and sinners. Reconciled. And this is my favorite line. Mild he lays his glory by. Born that man no more may die.

[29 : 25] Because Jesus did battle with sin and death. And now we do have the victory in Christ. Remember the silent night of World War I.

Peace came for a moment. But the fighting returned. They eventually picked back up their guns. And the war continued. Men who had for a moment been friends.

Returned to being fierce enemies. And peace was not yet to come. The Scottish poet Frederick Niven wrote.

Writing about this truce. Wrote this poem called. A Carol from Flanders. That's where that truce took place. And he ends the poem with these words. O ye who read this truthful rhyme.

From Flanders kneel and say. God speed the time when every day. Shall be as Christmas day. He longed for a peace that would last.

[30 : 33] Not a momentary peace. Not a momentary truce. But one that would last for all time. Don't we long for the same thing? An eternal peace. No more wars.

No more fighting. No more sin. No more battles fought. Isaiah 9. Tells us this about the Christ. For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given. And his name shall be called. Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father.

Prince of Peace. True peace. True peace. True deliverance. Only comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bring peace. Not just primarily peace with each other. But primarily peace with our God.

[31 : 33] God and sinners reconciled. We have all sinned against a holy God. We have broken his commandments. And thus made ourselves his enemies.

When people become enemies. They cannot go back to being friends. Until their differences are set aside. And sometimes reconciliation involves the payment.

But is essentially what Jesus did when he died on the cross. He paid the necessary price to reconcile us to our God.

The price was ours to pay. But Jesus paid it for us. And though he was God. He became a man born like us on that first Christmas day.

And now this morning there is a call to you. You can have peace with God. For all time. Because of what Jesus has done for you. God alone can save those who call on him.

[32 : 33] Whatever your trouble. Whatever your distress. Wherever you are. Will you call on him today? Will you cry out. God deliver me. I need peace. I'm at war.

I need peace. I'm in trouble. I need help. Call out in the name of the Lord. And he hears your cry. And he will answer you. And give you eternal peace.

Through his son. Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Let's pray. Well Father. I thank you this morning. For your word. That you have revealed yourself to us God. That you have made a way. Through your son. Jesus Christ.

For us to be forgiven of our sins. And to be reconciled to our God. For all eternity. So I pray for everybody here this morning. Lord.

[33 : 27] Whatever their trouble. Wherever they are. Whatever their distress. Whatever enemies are surrounding them. Whatever battles they are fighting. That you would deliver them God. That they would call on your name this morning.

They would cry out. Lord help me. Lord deliver me. And you would hear their cries. And you would show yourself powerful and strong. By answering their prayers.

And Lord. We long for the day. When we get to see our King and Savior Jesus face to face. When we can lay down all our crowns at his feet.

When we can say to him. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna. Save us Lord we pray. And that's exactly what you've done by sending your son.

You have saved us. And now we are going to be a people who sing to you. And give thanks to you. And we're going to say. Your steadfast love endures forever.

[34 : 27] In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.