

# Seeking God Above All Else

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. It is great to see you all here this morning on a beautiful day. The Lord is giving us a little extra summer, which is kind of nice, isn't it? So, just remember, watch the weather, because if you come to church and it's cold outside, it's going to be cold in here.

All right, so, just as long. We're glad you've joined us here in person and also on the live stream. We're continuing in our series in the book of Psalms, and this morning we're going to look at Psalm 27.

So, if you have a Bible with you or have it on your phone or if you're at home, you might want to pull that out. And as we turn towards where, just to sort of start, the context of this psalm that David is writing is that he is in a fearful time.

As you look through the psalm, you see that enemies abound. There are people seeking his destruction. They're attacking him in every way. It seems they desire to harm him physically, but also they're slandering him with false witness.

It says in verse 12 that they are breathing out violence against them. And so, he is in a difficult place.

[ 1 : 12 ] And even more than those external things, he's also afraid of being abandoned in verses 9 and 10. So, there are lots of fears that are surrounding David as he writes this psalm.

And I thought that was a good place to start because, golly, I feel like we live in a fearful time too. I have felt it this week in various ways, how fears have piled on my soul.

I have feared for our country as we've walked through a contentious and divided political week. And as we, even as we look ahead, it's still, many of those have not been addressed adequately.

And we continue to face challenges. And there are times I'm afraid for our country and how we're going to handle it and what will happen to us.

Every morning, I look at the New York Times count of national COVID cases. And it continues to rise, actually fairly dramatically. And I'm fearful of that. I'm fearful for the ways that it will impact people's lives in terms of their health and in terms of some who will die.

[ 2 : 20 ] I'm also fearful because I know that if the cases continue to rise locally, as they have been, it may affect my life in other ways. Last week, one of my kids had to stay home for a day because they weren't quite sure who had what.

And they kept everyone home for a day so they could contact trace through the school as one of the, someone in the school had contracted COVID. And it just made me realize this could continue and this could happen more.

And maybe my kids won't be in school next week or for the next three months. So I fear all these things. This week has also been personally one of where I've had fears.

My fiancée finally got her immigration interview, which was very exciting. It happened on Wednesday. And it went relatively well. But even with that, fears about how that process will continue to play out and what that means for us.

Lots of reasons why this could be a fearful time. Why it is a fearful time for me. I just want to stop and ask you, what about you? What fears, anxieties, worries have been hanging on you this week?

[ 3 : 33 ] Think about it for a minute. And as you think about those things, where do you go? Where do our hearts go when we are afraid?

There are lots of different ways we could go. Some of us will medicate, medicate with substances, medicate with entertainment. Medicate with constantly refreshing election updates on our phone. Whatever it is, whatever you try to distract yourself with, you might do that. Some of us might withdraw in despair. Some of us may become paralyzed, frozen in fear.

If I go this way, there are fearful things. If I go this way, there are fearful things. And we find ourselves just stuck. Maybe some of you are, I think I know my natural impulse when I'm afraid. And it's to do this. It's to call to arms. I want to muster my resources. I want to gather all the information. I want to get everything that I need so that I can come up with a plan and come up with a strategy to overcome those fears, to mitigate them, to somehow become in control of them.

[ 4 : 52 ] I want to prepare to fight against whatever it is. And to persist towards victory. When we turn to our psalm this morning, however, one of the things we see very clearly is that David has a different plan.

In this psalm, he expresses a different response to fearful times. So let's look at it together this morning. Psalm 27 is where we are. We're going to read it and pray and then we'll continue. Psalm 27. The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?

When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

Though wars rise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the Lord. Lord, that I will seek after. That I will seek after.

[ 5 : 59 ] That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. And to inquire in his temple. For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble.

He will conceal me under the cover of his tent. He will lift me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. And I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy.

I will sing and make melody to the Lord. Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud. Be gracious to me and answer me. You have said, seek my face.

My heart says to you, your face do I seek. Hide not your face from me. Turn not your servant away in anger. O you who have been my help.

Cast me not off. Forsake me not. O God of my salvation. For my father and my mother have forsaken me. But the Lord will take me in. Teach me your way, O Lord.

[ 7 : 02 ] And lead me on a level path because of my enemies. Give me not up to the will of my adversaries. For false witnesses have risen against me. And they breathe out violence. I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord. Be strong. And let your heart take courage. Wait for the Lord. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for this word.

We pray this morning that by your spirit, Lord, through the proclamation of this word, that you would strengthen our hearts. Lord, that we would find you to be the God that David found you to be so many years ago.

Lord, and that you would turn our hearts to you that we might be strengthened in a fearful day. Lord, I ask that you would help me this morning to proclaim your word clearly.

Lord, and that you would use this proclamation, Lord, in all of our hearts for your glory and for our good. We pray in Jesus' name.

[ 8 : 13 ] Amen. As we look at this psalm, the central idea is this. We pray in Jesus' name. We pray in Jesus' name. We pray in Jesus' name.

And we pray in Jesus' name. And we long passionately for him. We're going to break that down. We're going to walk through those three spot, three ideas. When we dwell with the Lord, we stand confidently in him and we long passionately for him.

So we're going to look at that together. So starting with when we dwell with God. You know, when you look at verse 4, it is the striking verse.

Many people know it. This is one that's quoted. It's put up in Hallmark, you know, artwork that you can buy and put on your wall. It's a verse that stands out.

But I really believe as I've wrestled with this psalm that it is this gravitational center of the psalm. Because David is surrounded by enemies.

[ 9 : 13 ] He's in a fearful time. He's crying out for God's help. And we don't know exactly what the historical context of it was. But think about David's life and what he was facing. You know, it might have been earlier in his life.

After having been anointed by Samuel the prophet as the next king of Israel. He then spent the second half of 1 Samuel being a fugitive. Being chased by the sitting king, Saul.

Who sought to destroy him out of jealousy and envy. And when you look through the stories at the end of 1 Samuel. David is constantly running and hiding and trusting in the Lord.

But he's facing an incredibly difficult time. Or it might have been that this psalm was written later in his life. After his son Absalom rose up against him in rebellion. And ran him out of Jerusalem.

And again David found himself in the wilderness. On the run as a fugitive. But in the seriousness of that context. And you see this in other places.

[10:18] In the Psalms where he'll begin with lament. But here he says. As he's wrestling with this fearful context. He gets to verse 4. And it's striking.

Because it feels like a left turn in the flow of thought. But this is exactly the key that David wants us to see.

That when he is afraid. What he needs most is God. He turns. And says. What I need most.

When I'm facing these fears. Is to be with God. And you see this in verse 4. One thing have I asked of the Lord. That I will seek after.

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord. All the days of my life. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. And to inquire in his temple. And you see that being with the Lord. Isn't just an ethereal thing. He's talking about it with language.

[11:14] Of temple. Of house. Of tents. He's talking about the place of dwelling. And think about the bigger picture. David's pulling on a theological thread. In the Old Testament.

Of God's presence with his people. Being physically manifested. As they came out of Egypt. In the Exodus. He traveled with them. As a pillar of smoke. And a pillar of fire.

And then. After Mount Sinai. He gave them instructions. To build a tabernacle. So that whenever they camped. They built this place. Where God would manifest his presence.

Among his people. To remind them. I am with you. And then David. Knowing that this would be. Something that would come ahead. That he would. That there would be a temple. In Jerusalem. Where this tabernacle.

Which was a portable worship center. Would then become a permanent one. In Israel. A building where. In the center of the temple. Is the Holy of Holies. Where the glory of God.

[12:08] Would manifest itself. To remind the people. That he was their God. And they were his people. And in that temple. Then was a place of. Sacrifices for sin.

A place of atonement. For their failures. A place of thanksgiving. Where gratitude. For the abundance. Of God's protection. And provision. Was expressed regularly. And a place where the leaders.

Could go. And inquire of him. And it was a place. Where the family of God. Would gather. Three times a year. They would come. To Jerusalem. To gather.

To worship God. Together. Together. David says. When I am afraid. This is what I need. This is what I long for. To be with God.

And not to be with God. The way sometimes we do it. With a half-hearted glance. At a cell phone. With a verse on it. As we're running out the door. Not a quick drive-by. Fill up at a gas station.

[13:06] Before we head off. To whatever else. He says. No. What I want to do. Is go and dwell there. I want to sit there. All the days of my life. And not just to sit there. But while I'm there.

What am I doing? I'm not doing ritual. I'm not doing lots of other things. I'm sitting and gazing at the Lord. And admiring his beauty. What we do with a beautiful piece of artwork.

Is just a foretaste of what we're meant to do with God. To sit and to look at it. And to explore it. As we gaze upon it. To see all of the intricacy. All the delicacy.

All the manifold ways. In which his beauty is displayed. David says. That's what I want. I want to see all of what God is. I want to see more of what God is.

And this is what he means. When he says to inquire in his temple. To inquire means. I know I don't know it all yet. I'm going to continue to learn. I'm going to continue to go. And ask questions.

[14:04] And seek to grow. In my knowledge. Of this God. God. And not merely knowledge. In the head sense. Of knowing more information. Though it is that. It's that information.

That then brings us. Into a deeper relationship. With someone else. It's what we do. When we date. Right? We go on a date with someone. It's like. I don't know you. You don't know me. Well let's get to know one another.

I'm going to inquire of you. And you're going to inquire of me. And as we gain information. We also build relationship. As we experience relationship. With one another.

We know one another better. And this. Is what David is saying. He wants to do with God. It is intensely personal. It is familial.

It is intimate. He needs to be with God. And this is his strategy. When he is in a fearful time. He's not preparing for battle.

[15:01] He's not mustering his troops. He's not gathering his weapons. He's not strategizing. But he's longing and seeking and pursuing.

To be with God. This is the one thing. That he needs. How about us? In the 20th century.

The evangelical church. If I can use that broadly. Is those who love Jesus. And love the Bible. And erase the political connotations. What the historical movement has meant theologically.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus. Is one of the central ways. That we have talked about.

What true Christian religion really is. It's not merely knowing true doctrine.

It's not merely serving people in need. It's not merely participating in church rituals. It's not merely church attendance. Or involvement in a community network.

[15:59] But at its core. It may be all of those things. And all those things are a beautiful expression of it. But at its core. It has to do with this personal transaction. Between ourselves and the Lord.

Where a born again heart. Has communion. With God himself. Do you know God. In that way.

And is he precious to you. Can you say one thing I have asked. And that I will seek after. To dwell in the house of the Lord.

All the days of my life. This is David's secret. In the face of fear. To seek the face of God. And as we see that.

As the centerpiece of the psalm. Then the rest of it hangs off of it. And there are two main implications. That we see as David expresses this. As we see the rest of the psalm.

[16:57] Fill out the picture. Of what it looked like for David. To do this. In verses 1 through 6. We see that he stands confidently. With God. And the second one.

In verses 7 through 14. That he longs passionately. For God. So let's look at that in turn. Verses 1 through 6. Gives us then. Hanging off of this single-minded devotion.

David. Comes right out of the gate. With this incredibly strong. Powerful statement of faith. God is my.

What is it? My light. And my salvation. Whom shall I fear? God is the stronghold of my life. Whom shall I be. Of whom shall I be afraid?

Lots of psalms begin with David. Or the psalmist crying out. In a time of need. Explaining his circumstances. Saying how long oh Lord. Will I suffer these things? But here David starts.

[17:55] Right out of the gate. With this incredibly strong. God focused. Declaration. He is light. And in his light. There is healing. And there is power. And there is revelation.

And there is glory. And there is life. He is my salvation. This is the place I go. For deliverance. He is my stronghold. He is like a mighty fortress.

And when I am inside him. My enemies cannot touch me. They cannot get to me. Because the walls are high. And they are strong. And they are sure.

And I am able to rest. And find security. And respite. And safety. Reminds me of the old VeggieTales song.

God is bigger than the boogeyman. And do you get anyone know that? Yeah. So it is. If you don't know it. It is. It is this great song. He is bigger than Godzilla. And the monster is on TV. And it is.

[18:51] It is just saying. God is such a strong refuge. Such a great help to us. That there is none. Who will stand before him.

Even David says. Even if an army encamps around me. Not just one or two enemies. But an army. God is greater than that. And David is confident. And he will deliver me.

He will vindicate me. Not only will he vindicate me. But he will honor me. He will lift my face up. He will lift me up. If you didn't listen to Pastor Nick's sermon last week. He talked about this psalm.

The idea of God raising up in the presence of his enemies. Our face towards him. In honor. He will conceal me from my foes.

And he will bring me into a place where I am untouchable. And this is the amazing thing. This is the picture. What David says is. When I dwell with God. I am indestructible.

[19:52] No matter how great my fears are. God is greater. No matter how serious the outcomes of the things that I fear might be. For me. God has got them. No matter how bloodthirsty my

enemies are.

No matter how great they seem to be. God will keep me dwelling with him. And because of that. I do not need to be afraid.

He will deliver me. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And there is this picture then. Of no matter what comes my way. When I am with God.

I am protected. And David expresses this with great confidence. Not only does this come with confidence. But in verse 6. It comes with gladness. And with joy. In worship. And in song.

Friends. This is why we gather. To worship God together. Because we remind ourselves. And we express this confidence. Of this is the God that we have put our trust in.

[ 20 : 51 ] This is the God in whom we believe. And though. Whatever fears we have carried.

Throughout this week. We come here to remember. And to be able to say with David. God is my light and my salvation.

Whom shall I fear? Now I know. Because I have been there. And some of you may be there this morning.

This statement of confidence. Feels like a step too far. I want to believe that. But I feel overcome. I feel. Don't you know the internal struggle.

The internal turmoil of my heart. As I face these fears. One of the beautiful things. That the Psalms do. Is give us language. Just as the first six verses.

Give us language. To state what we know is true. So that we can say. I believe. Lord help my unbelief. In the second half. He then exposes. The internal workings of his heart.

[ 21 : 50 ] And the conversation that he's having. Within himself. In this confidence. He then is. Expressing the process. Or the ongoing dynamics of his heart.

In the middle of it. Do you see how from verse six to verse seven. The voice of the speaker changes. No let me restate that.

It's not that the voice of the speaker changes. But the audience changes. He turns from talking to whoever. Maybe to himself. Or declaring it loud to the people. He turns to God. Says hear oh God. When I cry aloud. Be gracious to me. And answer me. He says. God I need you. I have this confidence.

But God I need you desperately. You've said seek my face. I do. I do seek your face. But then. Do you see what his next statement is. It's not confidence. It's longing. Hide not your face from me Lord.

[ 22 : 50 ] Turn not your servant away from me in anger. Don't be ashamed of me Lord. When you turn your face away from me. You turn your face of favor away from me.

And I find myself alone. It's terrifying. To think that that might be true. So he pleads with God. God don't do that. I think verse ten is probably a hypothetical.

Rather than a historical comment. The first reading is that it would be. Well this has happened to him. But I think it might be even. Be better read as an.

Even if. Even if my parents. Those who are closest to me. Those who are the ones who. Have the most reason to love me. And never forsake me. Even if they forsake me.

The Lord will not. The Lord will take me in. I can stay at his house. Not only can I stay in his house.

[ 23 : 50 ] Like couch surfing on his house. But he's going to invite me in. And make. Invite me to make him. My home. I will be welcomed. And I will be welcomed.

As an honored guest. But I will also be embraced. As a child. And I will come home. Where my enemies cannot touch me. When I come home.

This is where I am secure. Now my guess is that some of you. Have experienced a kind of rejection. That David expresses in this hypothetical.

Some of you have had parents. Reject you. And cast you out. Some of you have had marriages. Where your partner. Your spouse. Has rejected you.

And cast you out. Some of you have been. In school friendship groups. Where you who were part of the group. Suddenly found yourself. On the outside of the mean girls. Suffering painfully.

[ 24 : 49 ] From that rejection. Some of you. Have battled loneliness. That is an enemy. In all of these circumstances.

And many more. Where there's an internal dialogue. That rises up inside of us. What's wrong with us? Why don't they love us?

It must be my fault. I'm not good enough. My sins are too great. I'm too small to be noticed. This kind of rejection is powerful.

And it's painful. And David reminds us. That the Lord will not forsake us. But the Lord will welcome us.

The Lord will take us in. You are not alone in fearful times. He is with you. And so seek him.

[ 25 : 44 ] Seek his face. David ends this psalm in 11 through 14. By talking about how he pursues us. He pursues us by faith. Verses 11 through 12.

He says. Teach me your ways oh Lord. I trust that my way is not going to get me through this. I need to know your ways. So that I can walk with you. So that I can be instructed by you.

So that I can walk in paths of righteousness. That lead to life. And not go astray. As my enemies would. And to all sorts of ways in the world. Where I would seek to control. And take care of my own fears.

In my own ways. But that would only lead to destruction. Then verses 13 and 14. Faith that God will deliver.

If you have an ESV Bible. Or various Bibles. If you have a different translation than the ESV. I've wrestled with this verse a lot. This is one of those places.

[ 26 : 44 ] Where I read this verse. Verse 13. I'm like. God do you really mean this? And what does this really mean? Let's read it again. In the ESV it says. I believe that I shall look in the goodness of the Lord. In the land of the living.

And I always read this. As a simple reaffirmation of confidence. And it may be that. But in the original language. There's a word at the beginning. That is questionable.

Some manuscripts have it. Some don't. But if you have that in there. It then would read something slightly different. It would read along these lines. If I had not believed.

That I would see God's goodness. Where would I be? Either reading. Gets at core truths of this.

So it's not. We're not ranging into divergent. Meanings for the overall text. But I think that what the psalmist here is saying.

[ 27 : 39 ] If I didn't believe this. If I was left on my own. Without some confidence. That God would actually do good to me. I would be lost. Dwelling with God is an exercise of faith.

In God's delivering power. In the land of the living. And again. This is the other part where I wrestle. Does land of the living mean now? Because this is where I'm living right now.

Is it before I die? I'm going to see God's goodness? And certainly that's a truism. That we should be looking for. But actually. As I've studied this. I actually think that the greater weight here. Is that the land of the living.

Is the land that is to come. The future hope. When there will be no more death. And no more dying. And no more sickness. And no more tears.

There will be no more enemies to attack us. And nothing to fear. Because when Jesus returns. And when he renews the world. All things. When he brings his final judgment.

[ 28 : 41 ] And evil and death and sin are done for. Then we will live in a place. Where we know God's goodness. In its fullness. And the hope of that.

Gives us the ability to navigate. The fearful things now. And to know that even if. God doesn't protect me from my enemies. By preventing tragedy or trial.

By preventing us from getting sick or dying. From preventing our enemies. From seemingly having victory over us. In the moment. Because all of these things. Seem to happen in the world. Even if those things happen.

When I dwell with the Lord. There is an indestructible nature. To who I am. That will carry me through. Because I know that God has me. And I know where I am going. And so he says wait.

Verse 14. Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart take courage. And wait. And waiting is something that we are all bad at doing. We live in an instant age.

[ 29 : 41 ] And we want to fix things now. We want to take control. We want to find a way to overcome. So that the problems are no longer there. But David says no. That's not the path.

The path is to wait for God. To do for us. What we can't do for ourselves. He could not conjure up an army. To defeat the armies that were chasing him. Instead David said seek God's presence. And trust that with him. Our help will come as well. And friends is this not the good news of the gospel. That we believe. That when we wait on him.

We do not wait in vain. Think about what Jesus has done. Though we long to dwell with God. With God. What Jesus has done is said.

I have come to dwell with you. So that you can dwell with God. This is the beauty of John 1:14. The word became flesh. And dwelt among us. Literally tabernacled among us.

[30:43] He set up his tent. The meeting place. Between God and man. So that we could come. And in Jesus know God. And in Jesus know God. It's Jesus who said.

As he was ascending into heaven. The end of Matthew. I will never leave you. Nor forsake you. To the end of the age. I will always be with you.

What a wonderful thing to know. That though we long to dwell with God. God has initiated towards us. So that we can do this. And not only that. But we have great confidence.

In the face of our greatest fears. Because friends. We may fear lots of things in this world. But the Bible tells us. The things we're most to fear. Are sin and death. And to live apart from God.

To be under his judgment. And outside of his life. And Jesus has come. By defeating these enemies. His life. By his perfect righteous life.

[31:44] By his sacrificial death for us. By his resurrection from the dead. He has defeated the powers of sin and death. So they no longer have power. Over those who have faith in Jesus.

God's love will never fail us. Because we know that Christ has died for us. God's promises will never fail us. Because he has risen from the dead. And so we can say with Paul.

What can separate us from the love of God? Nothing. We are more than conquerors. Through him who died for us.

And so we can say. With the apostle Paul. In the passage we read earlier. In Philippians 3. I count all things as lost. For the sake of knowing Christ.

And being found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own. By works. But a righteousness as given to me. By faith in Christ. I want to know him.

[32:45] The power of his resurrection. The fellowship of his sufferings. So that I might be raised with him to eternal life. This is what I seek. This is what I pursue. And I keep going along this path.

To not just know about him. But to know him in this intimate and personal way. That David recommends to us. That we would not only know him. But we would treasure him and love him.

I wonder if those of you who are here this morning. Who may be exploring Christianity. Who may be asking. What is this all about? Maybe you are feeling overwhelmed.

By your fears this morning. And wondering. Is it possible that this could be true? Explore what it is that Christ has done for us.

This is the hope. That we as a church proclaim to the world. And we invite you to come. Put your trust in Jesus today. And for those of us who have put our trust in Jesus.

[33:46] As we face our fears. Let us listen to David's encouragement this morning. Seek him. With the single mindedness. One thing I ask.

One thing I will seek after. That I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever. With expectant faith. Let us seek him. And know that he will meet with us.

Let's pray. Lord we thank you for this word. We thank you for the encouragement that it is. For the reminder that it is. Of what you have done for us.

God I pray for those. Who are. Struggling with fear today. That Lord we might find. With you.

And in you. A place of refuge. A place of confidence. Lord. Help us Lord. To wait on you. And to seek you. Oh Lord we pray these things in Jesus name.

[34:44] Amen.