

Prayer for the Fatherless

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[0 : 00] All right, we're going to get right back into Psalm chapter number 10 today. And as we finish, we'll look at the gospel implications to us personally as a family. And then lastly, we'll look at it together as a church.

So last Sunday, Thatcher, Grant, and I, and Carson, and Eric Elrod were in New York City. I shared a little bit about that on Thursday. And while we're in New York, Ellie Canavan, and she has a beautiful adoption story, and we got the What's That? I'm out of the church family.

But we're in a room, maybe I'm not good at measuring, 10 by 20 feet. And we've taken all the chairs out. And Ellie's favorite game was she kept wanting to play hide and go seek.

And hide and go seek, as fun as it is, isn't a lot of fun in a 10 by 20 room when there's nothing in it, right? And so we would close our eyes, count, look up, and be like, there you are, Ellie. You're right there. Or you're over there.

But kids think that's a lot of fun. Before they begin playing hide and go seek, the first game that most kids play, let's see if everybody's thinking the same thing I do. The first game, a little kid learns to play.

[1 : 05] They're still sitting on your lap. They like to play. Oh, good. All right. We are on the same page here, okay? And they like to play peekaboo. And it's exhilarating for them, right? It's like, it's the first roller coaster.

They're like, nobody's here. Everybody's here. Nobody's here. All right? And they just think they're making people disappear by covering it. And this never gets old to them. Many of you have a kid that just would have played it for hours on end, right?

They just never tire of it. And it's so much fun. And I'd say just like the fear that they would have that first roller coaster, that's what they're feeling. Because the idea that they don't know that you were there is one of the scariest things for them.

And then it's also then when you're revealed again that you're there, it's one of the most exciting things to go from fear to comfort back and forth is what they're trying to accomplish in both of those games.

Psalm chapter number two, we have something that is not fun, but something that is very sorrowful here. In Psalm chapter number 10, we find what people feel like when they're living in a world where they believe that God is hidden.

[2 : 12] So over the next 20 to 25 minutes, we're going to look here at this psalm at the heart of God for the fatherless and the implications on us personally as families and as a church.

We'll end in prayer for the unborn, for the fatherless, and as a church as we live out the gospel in our community. And then we will end with singing. And I will, before that, though, I will share some things upon my heart for us to live this out together as a church.

So we've sung this today. And I'm going to take my coat off. I think being 40 makes you feel different, Travis, all right? Because Stephanie said, some of you have called me a used car salesman today, all right?

And I'm okay with that. I have a lot full of cars I'll sell you. Others say I look like a game show host there. And so even though you might be able to pay attention to me, I can't hardly pay attention to myself in that bright coat.

Because for a moment, I want to talk to you about something that is quite serious and quite heavy, but I think it's necessary. When I asked Stephen, could we sing the song, Do You Feel the World is Broken?

[3 : 13] And we sung that together. It's why on a special day when we're talking about the joy of family ministry, why even bring that in to the equation? Why speak about the brokenness of the world?

And it's because no proper conversation about the power of the gospel can exclude the reality of sin. The largest church in our city recently has become to affirm something that is not what God would describe as a family.

As a church, we're called to be salt and light. We're not called to comfort people in their lies or in deception. The world wants to redefine a family.

And why would Satan so much want to redefine a family? It's because it's in the family that's so much potential for the gospel to be taught. And so as the faithful, we live in a world that acts as if there is no God.

Here in this psalm, it begins with a lamentation of God's hiddenness. There's times that people's godless actions make us believe that our God is hidden from us. That's verse number one.

[4 : 19] Why standest thou far off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in the times of trouble? The corruption and evil at the time made it seem as if God was hidden from him.

And the immediate trouble that the psalmist was in wasn't the great problem. But God perceived failure to intervene was the greater problem to the psalmist. Is that God seemed hidden from them.

And so here we have a description. Do you follow along with me from verses two through nine? I'm going to give you a summary of these verses here. In verse number two, we're going to see that their pride they pursue and they persecute the poor and the vulnerable.

Their desire is above that of those that they are given the care for. That they are selfish. They want selfish gain in their lives is the description. Then in verse number three, we'll see that the wicked boast about their heart's desire.

And they teach that covetousness is not only acceptable, but it's right. And then verse number four, the wicked through the pride of countenance will not seek after God. God is not in his thoughts.

[5 : 25] So God's not in their thoughts, their pride. They believe that they are as God. Verse number five, the judgment of God is not in their minds. It's far out of their sights. They puff up those that they're opposed to.

They believe that they will not answer to anyone. Verse number six, he has said in his heart, I shall not be moved for I shall never be an adversity. This was a commitment to a selfish lifestyle to say nothing will move me.

Verse seven, their mouth is full of deceit and fraud and vanity and mischief. There is evil all throughout the village hidden behind the doors of every home. He sitteth in the lurking places of the village and the secret places doth he murder the innocent.

His eyes are privately set against the poor. Yesterday with the fire department. Thank you. Many of you helped us feed the fire department. And I sat there with some firemen and I shared with them how I grew up in a small town in Kentucky.

But then when I came to Alpharetta and I did some ride alongs with the police officers, officers, I realized that even though the doors are nicer and the houses are nicer, behind the doors there's the same wickedness and the same cruelty that you could find in any part of the world.

[6 : 34] Here in this verse it speaks about the innocent being slayed. This is a time of year that churches take a moment and we recognize the sanctity of life. We recognize that there has been a great tragedy that's happened in our generation where hundreds of thousands of children never had a chance to live the life that was given to them, that it was taken.

And that continues to this day. This is just not some pagan practice that we read in the book of Psalms, but it's among us still to this day. Verse number eight, In the secret places they murder the innocent.

Verse number nine, They lie and wait looking to kidnap the vulnerable. He lieth and waits secretly as a lion in the dim. He lieth and waits to catch the poor.

He let's catch the poor when he draweth him in the net. So we may not know exactly what that looks like 3,000 years ago with that description, but in the day in which we live in, it looks like 38,000 pregnancies in Georgia ending in abortion.

It looks like Atlanta being identified as one of the cities with the highest incidences of child sex trafficking, with over 50% of those girls coming from foster care. 70% of them being actively enrolled in school, being mistreated by family members.

[7 : 52] It looks like a porn industry that is greater than the combined revenue of ABC, NBC, and CBS, or the NFL, the NBA, and the Major League Baseball. And you would say, why would you bring that up?

It's because men, the pornography industry, it funds the sex trafficking industry. And not only is pornography, it's not noble, but it's hurting our country.

And so do we feel the world is broken? We do. Do we feel that God is hidden? He's not. But we live in a world of brokenness where people must wonder, is God hidden from us?

And so why is the world as it is? And the reason is, so many people live believing that their heart, that they will not answer to a holy and a just God. Psalm 10, 13. Wherefore, doth the wicked contemn God?

He has said in his heart, thou will not require it. Contempt means to treat or regard with contempt. And if you're like me, now I've got to go find the definition for the word in my previous definition.

[8 : 51] All right? And so what the word contempt is, a disregard for something that should be taken into account. The world lives not taking into account that there is a God.

The world lives simply as if they are in the home of an absent father. They live as if there's no one who cares for them, and if there's no one in which they will ever have to give an account for their actions.

And so this lie is very destructive to our homes. I took the boys last weekend to the 9-11 memorial, and we saw that. I explained to them when I was in college outside of Knoxville how it was on high alert, as many cities in America were on high alert because of different places that would be an attack.

We must all recognize in here that Satan's attempt to fight against those that would worship God is targeted in on our family. The home is God's design to help give us a working definition of all the theological words that really should matter to us.

We should see forgiveness as it's first demonstrated inside of our home. We should feel the protection of unconditional love in our homes. We begin to understand grace and mercy first in our home.

[10 : 10] It is in the home that we should learn what it means to be loved and accepted, so that when we read Ephesians 1-6, and it says, To the praise of the glory of His grace, where it has made us accepted in the beloved, we should be able to think like at home, but in a grander and an eternal scale.

The place that defines all these terms is a place in which Satan wants to bring great confusion. So we live in a world who says there is no God, and as the wicked celebrate this lie, children suffer as a result.

But there's good news in the gospel. We have a father who hears. The psalmist affirms that the Lord dwells among His people, and He does hear, and He does answer their cries.

Our God is not just a God who speaks, remarkable as that is, but He is a God who listens. One of the things that a fireman told me yesterday, he said, I know that God didn't speak audibly to me, but He spoke louder than that.

He was talking about reading the Bible, and I love to hear that, that God, He not only speaks to them, but it's remarkable that He would listen to us. In the book of James, when we're called to be swift to hear, we're called to be like our Heavenly Father.

[11 : 25] Our Father that hearest our prayers, it says repeatedly throughout the Psalms, who attends unto our voice, which means when you cry out, when you feel alone, you're being heard.

It means when anybody cries out and they feel alone, they are being heard. And so we pray to our Father who hears. And so in this psalm, we move from a limitation of a prayer to God, for God to come to their aid.

Verse number 12, it says, Arise, O Lord, and lift up that hand, and forget not the humble. This is an appeal for divine intervention. And that's what we're asking when we pray to God.

We're saying, God, we need you to act on behalf of those that are being afflicted. We should base our appeal based upon verse 13. The Lord, you are being contemned, God, that your reputation, and when God rescues His people, He also rescues His reputation.

He is being glorified. And so we can say here, verse number 1, it says, Why standest thou far off, Lord? Why hidest thyself in the times of trouble? We have an answer to that in this psalm.

[12 : 33] And He does not stand afar off. And He does hear Him. And He does see us. Verse 17, Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble. Verse 14, Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to require it with thy hand.

The poor committeth himself unto thee. Thou art the helper of the fatherless. So God is not hidden from us. We do not sorrow as people that have an absent God in this world.

And people can try to live as if He is not existent. But as God's people, we know that He is. He sees us and He hears us. But more than that, we see a God that comes to us in our sorrow.

One of the first names of God recorded in the Bible is declared by Hagar. That's Abraham's servant. After she desperately fled into the desert, while pregnant, no less, to escape harsh treatment from her mistress, Sarah.

In Genesis 16, 13, it says, And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou, God, seest me. For she said, I also here looked after him that seeth me.

[13 : 45] That is the name El Roy, the God who sees me. What a profound statement that the God of the universe could see us individually.

In our hurt, in our pain, He sees their need. We have a God who sees and hears us in our need. And that name continues throughout the Old Testament.

God saw the heartache of Leah when she cried out. He saw the injustice of Jacob. He saw the suffering and enslavement and groaning in the misery of the Israelites. And El Roy, the God who sees, was present there.

But even more than seeing, Jesus Himself bore our griefs and our sorrows. Isaiah 53, 4, Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

And in the end, it tells us, at the end of this book here, at the end of it, it says that God will wipe away every tear from His children's eyes. But until that time, there's a promise that He will draw near to us that are brokenhearted, that are contrite in spirit, that we are not left alone.

[15 : 00] There's a day coming that Psalms 10 tells us where He will set all things in order, where all evil will be vanished. Verse 15, Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.

That's quite clear speech, right? Take away the strength. Take away the power. See out His wickedness till they find none. If God seeks it out and destroys it, it will no longer be found.

And this may not seem like an appropriate prayer for a New Testament believer, but nevertheless, when we pray the Lord to come quickly, we're calling for Him to come and to judge the world and to remove wickedness entirely, that there will be justice, that there will be redemption.

And we know that a day is coming when Jesus will step into the story and all evil will end and healing will be found. And as it says in verse number 18, that the man of earth may no more oppress.

But until that day, what are we to do? We are to walk as people humbly before God in justice, walking in other people's stories and letting God use us to bring comfort and to bring healing and to bring justice.

[16 : 15] Justice will reign and deliverance will come. So on behalf of the fatherless who feel abandoned, we feel like God is hidden. And I pray, surely, Lord, come quickly.

But I will also pray that God would show me how I am to respond to the needs around me that He is able to meet through me. Psalm 10 leaves us, and the situation of the whole Old Testament leaves us, looking forward, longing for more, looking for the day to the point that the time when justice will reign and deliverance will come.

The day that the earth groans for, and we groan with it, for the day with a spirit of adoption where the children of God will be revealed. That should be the longing inside of your heart.

And if it isn't, then you've allowed the things of this world to take a place that they don't. There is so much wickedness and so much heart, and every one of us in here ought to be able to pray, surely, Lord, come quickly.

Come and set things right. So the first implication that we have together is one that is personal in here. We should see our own brokenness in the story.

[17 : 22] We must recognize that we are wicked. We desire selfish gain. That description of verses 1 through 10, that is a description of people that sin. The liar begins with a desire for selfish gain.

The covetousness is a person who starts with selfish gain. Our sin is a result of acting upon a selfish gain that gives us no thought to God's glory or to the good of others, living as if God is hidden from us and that we will never have to give an account to Him.

It's a desire for selfish gain that leads us to ignore the one true God. It's our attempt to live in this world believing that there is no God and that we are fatherless.

And that's why people need us, and that's why we need people so often to affirm our sin. It's not just so that we would participate with other people. It's that we could have confidence in the lie that God is hidden and God does not care.

That's what we like to do, and we must see ourselves in that before we see another generation, before we'd see other people, that we are the wicked and that we are the weak. Not only are we the wicked in this story, but we are the weak.

[18 : 30] Have you ever felt trampled upon by someone else's sin? Have you ever been hurt by it? We've been going through the book of Lamentations, been several months now, but people that were dealing with the consequences of other people's actions.

So we live through our life with broken relationships, unmet needs, wrestling with loneliness or hurt or pain. And so our wickedness that we must recognize, and our wickedness and our weakness, the only solution for that is the cross of Jesus Christ.

It's at the cross that we discover that God judges our sins, but He also calls us to be His sons and His daughters. God judges our sin, and at the same time, He makes us sons.

We are helpless in our sins, fatherless, slaves to sin, and God on high reaches down, and instead of leaving us as sinners in rebellion, worthy of eternal damnation, He raises up to be His children in whom He delights, and that's what happens at the cross.

And so an understanding of the gospel is that we no longer believe that God is hidden. We no longer desire to believe that He is far from us. We know that He sees us in our sin, but He has forgiven us and made us His sons.

[19 : 40] Do we not understand why people would want to live their lives pushing out the fact that there is a Creator, that people would want to live their life as if there's no God that they will ever answer to?

Because they don't understand that we have a Father, that when He looks at them in their sin, He says, I see it completely, but I love you unconditionally, and I will die in your place.

And so we must understand why people would run away from Him, why people would want no relationship with a person who seems to be an absent father in their life, why when they feel like they're not being cared for, they wouldn't want to know Him.

But that is not the God of the fatherless. So we see our personal application in here as believers and as unbelievers, which is the only two categories that this world has.

But secondly here, we look at the implications for us as a family. A Christian home is a simply home that lives acknowledging that we have a God who sees us, who has forgiven us, and has made us His sons and His daughters.

[20 : 42] That's how our homes become orange. That's how the light of the gospel and the warmth of our homes make our homes a shining beacon of what the gospel is living out through us.

And so when we bring the gospel into our homes, we don't just leave it as a message that's being taught at church. We help our kids know that our God is not hidden when they see our love and our care for them as an expression of His love and His care for them.

And we should allow this wonder and knowledge to overflow into the care of others. Deuteronomy chapter number 24, when God's speaking about how He would want to demonstrate His love to the stranger and to the fatherless and to the widow, He tells them this, When you go out onto your field to harvest and you have forgot a sheaf in the field, don't send somebody out there to fetch it.

When you shake the trees, don't shake it too much. is that the abundance in which I'm going to give you is to meet the need of the fatherless and the widows among you.

And so we've got to ask ourselves some questions. I'm going to ask Kristen to come to the piano. As I speak to families here in a moment, I'm going to ask you to pray for it. Pray for your family. Make a personal decision and make one as a family.

[22 : 01] So the next time that you sit down with the family, with your family for a meal, let me encourage you to do this. Would you pray to God to show you what you are to do with the abundance that He has placed in your life?

And would you ask God if He hasn't provided more for you than your family needs, because there are people outside of your table that He wants to respond to their cry?

And write this down. Write this verse down. Micah 6, 8. And say it and read it with your family. It says, He has showed thee, O man, what is good and what doth the Lord require to thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.

And summary, let me put it like this. You and I aren't made to hear all the afflictions of this world. And I won't ask you to. I won't take a moment.

I won't be sentimental and say, let's have a moment of silence and for you to listen to all the cries of those kids and those families and those people that feel that God has forsaken them.

[23 : 11] They feel like there's no God because everybody around them lives like there's no God. I wouldn't ask you to do that because you can't hear those cries and you weren't made to hear those cries. But I want to remind you that the God of heaven hears every one of those.

In this county, in this country, and around the world. And there's nobody that will ever cry out to him that he is not a father to the fatherless. But this is what I do know that we can do in this moment that you and I can bow our heads and we can say, God, you did not make us to listen to the cries of this world, but you have made us to listen to you.

And when you hear and you want to respond, in my family, you can direct this. You can give us an assignment and we will live justly. We will live humbly.

We will take what you have given us and we will meet the needs of those who need love and comfort. And so that's what I'm going to ask you to do at this time. Would you bow your head?

Would you pray? A believer, would you listen to God, the God who hears the cry of the afflicted, and ask him how he would show you this, how you could show this world that he is not hidden, that he is listening, and that he is there, and he is present, that he is El Roy.

[24 : 32] He is the God who sees. And may God use you to walk into a room and turn the lights on for some people who believe that God has been hidden from them.

Some of you in here today, with everything in me, I wish I could turn the lights on for you because he knows your story. He has heard your pain and he sees you and he's listening to you.

He also sees your sin. He sees your rebellion and his son went to a cross to pay for that. That's how much he loves you. That's how much he wants to be your heavenly father.

And so there's no reason that you would continue living as if God is hidden from you. And today is the day of salvation. Today is the day that the fatherless will find a father in our God.

And I want to invite you to do that. I want you to meet somebody afterwards. I want you to find somebody that will be standing at the next table when we dismiss. I want you to right now, if you're in this room or watching online, raise your hand not to me but to the God of heaven and say, I need a father because I am fatherless.

[25 : 45] I do not have you as my heavenly father. And you've seen my sin but you have loved me and I want to be your child. That's your testimony of the day. Raise your hand in acknowledging it, the hymn.

And so now is the time of the response. I'm going to ask my wife to join me at the altar. I'm going to ask you to find a place to pray and we are in no hurry but we're going to respond to what God has said and we're going to say, you hear all God and you know all God and you're all seeing but would you direct our hearts to the places in this world and this community that you would want to show and to demonstrate your love.

for your MAC Bill and your other community and get allowed to meet your sisters and Bunny and be perfect for their help.

And that I said, you know all I will remind you we are to trust you and that may be or not if everyone has a great interest for your husband and you know all including or Süper and precedence be