

Singing on sleepless nights

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 May 2024

Preacher: Richard Weightman

[0 : 00] It's always comforting for the preacher when things happen in a service that just make you think, yep, God's got his hand on this.

And one of the things I was thinking about as I was preparing, and it's talking about singing on sleepless nights, although we'll move around that a bit.

When I was due to have a triple heart bypass some years ago, one of the songs that came to me was The Lord's My Shepherd.

And that was a song that really spoke to me at that time in particular. And I was going to, on Thursday, Michelle had contacted Anne and said, if Richard wants a song on today's service, let me know.

And I was thinking I'll put that one on. But I never got back to Michelle. So she didn't know that I was thinking about having that song, but God knew it. And not only have I had it once already, but I've got it again after I speak.

[1 : 06] So how about that? Not only once, but twice. So that's, you know, that's really comforting to a preacher to know that God's in control of the service. So yes, we're in this series, The Soul Song.

And I'm looking at Psalm 4, Singing on Sleepless Nights. It sounds like the title of a song, doesn't it? You know, sort of 70s, a 70s pop song, really.

Singing on Sleepless Nights. But I'm going to, I'm going to, the sermon really is in, well, it's three parts now, really. And I'll explain that as I go along.

So I'm going to go fairly quickly through the first couple of parts, I think. And then get on to the third part. And I'll explain that as we move along.

So if we can have the next slide, Josh. So yes, there's the two parts. What can we learn from David in this psalm? And what can we learn that may help us sleep at night when we do have sleepless nights?

[2 : 06] And I'm sure there's many of us in the congregation who have had sleepless nights or who have sleepless nights. One in three of the population, studies say, which is about 20 million people in the UK, suffer from insomnia.

Which is a lot of people, isn't it? It's a big proportion of the population. So those are the two. And then the third thing really is just expanding on one of the things I'll look at.

About why we need to know our God and why we need to know our Scripture. So let's move on.

Josh, to the next slide, please. So Psalm 4, the background to Psalm 4.

Psalms 3, 4, and 5 may have been written together. There's evidence to suggest that they may have been written together. And possibly when David was fleeing his son Absalom.

Now Absalom was trying to kill David, take the kingdom away from him. So David was in a pretty bad place. And he had every reason at this time to be sleepless.

[3 : 12] So each of those three Psalms is clearly written in difficult times. Psalms 3 and 4 talk about lying down and sleeping.

And Psalm 5 talks about coming through the night into the morning. And sometimes that is a really good feeling, isn't it? Coming through the night into the morning.

Sometimes you can think about things in the night and they seem an awful lot worse than they do when you come into the morning sometimes. Especially if you've just prayed about them or sung about them or sung a song or sort of a psalm.

Something that's been able to just lift your heart, lift your spirits. And then come through the night and into the morning. Next slide, please, Josh. So Psalm 4 verses 1 and 2 says, Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God.

Give me relief from my distress. Be merciful to me and hear my prayer. How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

[4 : 30] So these first two verses are David's desperate cry to God. He's calling to God. He's talking about the slander that he's suffering.

And it's also a cry to the people. So, first of all, he cries to God. O my righteous God, give me relief from my distress.

Now, some translations have that way saying, Thank you for giving me relief from my distress. He's looking back and he knows that God has given him relief from his distress in the past.

And he's looking forward and saying, Thank you for giving me relief in my distress. Give me relief from my distress. Be merciful to me and hear my prayer.

David is a godly man. And he knows that God will hear his prayers. And then he talks about, How long, O men, will you turn my glory into shame?

[5 : 27] This is men who are chasing delusions. Chasing wrong things. And how do we know that? Somebody was in these days, John, I think it was, Was praying about the times that we are living in.

And we know men who slander God. Who are unable to understand or see God at work. And we wonder why.

We wonder what's going on in our world, In our society. And David's the same. He sees these things going on. And he cries to them.

Why? Why are you loving delusions and seeking false gods? There's only one God. There's only one true living God. And that was for David. And that's the same for us today. So he was crying out to God.

And he was crying out to men. And he was worried about the slander. The falsity that was being cast at him. That people were being told about him. When he was trying to lead a godly life.

[6 : 27] And we know David had a colorful life, shall we say. But God loved David. He was a man after God's own heart.

So he was loved by God. And he couldn't understand when he looked there. And he saw men. And he said, These delusions that you chase these false gods. Next slide please, Josh.

So verses 3 to 6. Move on to godly behavior. Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord will hear when I call to him.

In your anger do not sin. When you're on your beds, Search your hearts and be silent. Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord. Many are asking, Who can show us any good?

Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. God hears the prayers of the godly. It says in the Bible, He doesn't hear the prayers of the wicked.

[7 : 29] Of the unrighteous. He hears the prayer of the righteous. Now here's if you're here today, And you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

He'll hear your prayer if it's a prayer of repentance. Don't let that. God loves you. God wants you to pray to him and repent. And then continue to pray to him.

For all the things in your life. All those situations, circumstances, people, Close to you, far away, round the world, Next door, in your house, Whoever it might be.

God wants you to pray for those situations and circumstances. And God will hear the call of the godly. God heard David. Because David was a godly man.

And don't sin in anger. How tempting it must have been for David to say, Right, get together chaps. Get your swords. Strap your swords on. We'll go after Absalom.

[8 : 26] We'll go after everybody who's slandering me And wants to take the kingdom away. And we'll just slice them up. Get your swords out. Kill them. Be done with it. No.

Don't sin in your anger. God didn't want that for David. He didn't want him to do that. David was a godly man. And David did not want to sin in anger.

And I think that is something sometimes we need. And especially if we've had a night That perhaps has been fraught and difficult. And we get up and all the pressures of the day come in. And, you know, children and job and family And circumstances and whatever it might be.

There's a temptation to lash out at somebody. Usually the person closest to you, isn't there? You know, you lash out at them. Don't sin in anger. Take the lesson of David. Do you fear your circumstances?

Did David fear his circumstances? Yes. I'm sure he did. And we can fear our circumstances. Do we doubt the ways of the Lord? No. We don't.

[9 : 31] The longer we go on walking with him. Less and less do we doubt his ways. Sometimes his ways can be confusing to us. And we wonder, what is he doing in this?

And sometimes it's only when we look back, maybe years later. Years. That we see that he's been at work. Don't doubt the ways of the Lord. Do we understand the ways of the Lord?

No. We don't necessarily understand the ways of the Lord. The Lord works in mysterious ways. And the longer you know him, the more you realize the truth of that.

But do you trust in the ways of the Lord? David trusted in the ways of the Lord. We need to trust in the ways of the Lord. Move on please, Josh.

Next slide. And verses 7 and 8. What gladness David has in the midst of all of these circumstances.

[10 : 39] Being harassed on all sides. Being threatened. His life being threatened. His kingdom certainly being threatened. Here he is being glad and saying, Greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.

Now when I was looking at this, you know, we go into the shops. And if we want a particular type of fruit or vegetable, we can usually get it.

Whatever the time of year, you know, we can get aubergines and avocados and kiwis and lemons and tomatoes. You know, I grew up when tomatoes and lettuce was a summer thing.

A salad was a summer thing. You didn't have tomatoes in the winter. And this is the time, I didn't live in David's time, but at the same times, David would have, they gave thanks.

They gave huge thanks for the harvest. The harvest came through. They were able to give wonderful thanks for the harvest. And here's David saying, I'll rejoice with greater joy than the harvest.

[11 : 41] In all of those circumstances. You know, sleepless nights that he may have been having, but he could still rejoice greater than those who were rejoicing because of the harvest that had come in.

His heart was full. His heart was full of praise. Rejoicing even in his trials. And again, that's something for us to learn, isn't it?

To rejoice in our trials. And how difficult that can be sometimes. But we need to learn to rejoice in our trials. And I, I certainly found that to be true, as I said, when I was talking earlier, about when I was facing that operation.

You know, that was a trial. But I was able to rejoice that God was with me. I knew that God gave me that song and others, and other words, to know that God was with me.

Whatever happened in that situation, our souls are safe with God. Our souls are safe with God.

[12 : 45] That's very important, isn't it? To know that our souls, no matter what, no matter what happens to this body, if it breaks down, gives up, drops apart, which it sometimes feels as though it's doing, my soul is safe.

My soul is secure. If I've accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, then my soul is safe forever, and ever, and ever.

Next slide, please, Josh. There's a couple of quotes here, one from Tim Keller, and one from Donald Arthur Carson, who's an evangelical scholar.

Tim Keller says, once you are in a crisis, there's no time to sit down to give substantive study and attention to parts of the Bible. As a working pastor for four decades, I've often sat beside people who were going through terrible troubles and silently wished they'd taken the time to learn more about their faith before the tidal wave of trouble had engulfed them.

And Carson said, it's important to try to establish Christian structures of thought that are already givens before pain and bereavement strike.

[14 : 02] Part of what I teach congregations is with the aim that more Christians will be better prepared for suffering, very importantly, when it comes. Not if it comes, but when it comes.

Two sentiments there, two quotes really, the same thing. Saying, I wish people knew their Bible more, knew their Scripture more, knew their God more, before trouble comes along and strikes and strikes them.

Next slide, please, Josh. So, we need to know our God, our faith and our Scripture now.

And I'll come back to that statement. That's really part three of what I'm talking about this morning.

But we need to know our God, our faith and our Scripture now.

Just like David, we need to be able to call to God. Answer when I call you. God will hear you. If you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, God will hear you.

[15:18] God hears the righteous. He hears your prayers. You may not always get the answer you want. You may not always get the answer you want right at the time that you want it.

But God hears your prayers. Be sure God hears the call of the godly. The Lord will hear when I, the godly, call to Him.

That's what David says. The Lord will hear when I, the godly, call to Him. The Lord will hear when I, a Christian, will call to Him.

And actually, a Christian, yes, I am a Christian. But, one of the things is, to become a Christian is a one-off, at the time, decision when you give your life to Jesus.

You then become a disciple. And that's a life's work, being a disciple. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus, growing in your faith, being a disciple.

[16:25] So yes, important, of course, the most important thing in your life. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, make that decision. Take that step to become a Christian.

And then get on the walk of discipleship with Him, with the Holy Spirit, helping you and guiding you. Trust in the ways of the Lord.

Trust in the Lord. That's what David says. Trust in the Lord. Simple, isn't it? Except when you're in trouble like David was in. Or you're in trouble like some of us may be in in this room. But trust in the Lord.

That's what the Word says. Trust in the Lord. Have a glad heart. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when the harvest is taken in.

Rejoice even in our trials. For you alone, O Lord, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. So let's move on to part two.

[17:26] How do we sing on a sleepless night? Out of tune, some of us? Move on to the next slide, please, Josh. One in three people, about 20 million people, suffer from insomnia in the UK.

Lie awake, can't get to sleep, wake early, stressed and anxious when they can't sleep. In human terms, people try many things. Go to bed and wake up at the same time.

You know, don't use your devices. Try and relax. Exercise. Don't eat too late in the evening. All of these sorts of things are human things that you can do to try and help your sleep patterns.

So I'm told. Next slide, please. John Piper says, sleep is a daily reminder from God that we are not God. Once a day, God sends us to bed like patients with a sickness.

The sickness is a chronic tendency to think we are in control and that our work is indispensable. To cure us of this disease, God turns us into helpless sacks of sand once a day.

[18:32] How humiliating to the self-made man or woman that he or she has to give up all control, become as limp as a suckling infant every day.

It's wonderful, isn't it? A wonderful description of sleep, really, that. It's a brilliant quote on sleep. And it is very humbling. Next slide, Josh, please. So if sleep is humbling, how much more is not being able to sleep humbling?

And what can we do to help us? Now, I'm not here to say, you know, if you're a good Christian, you'll be able to sleep eight hours a night, ten hours a night, you'll not, you know, fine.

I'm not going to, I wouldn't be that arrogant to suggest that. But, be humble. Sleep, like everything else in our lives, is a gift from God.

And maybe sleeplessness is a gift from God. Maybe he's given us sleeplessness as a gift, a hard gift to bear, but maybe one that he's given us to focus on the scriptures, to think of him.

[19:41] You know, not to get wrapped up in ourselves, but to turn our eyes and our heart away from ourselves. So maybe sleep, sleeplessness, is a gift from God.

And we need to use that gift just as any other gift that we've been given by God. Be humble, meditate on God's purposes and promises. You know, God talks about in Matthew the birds of the air and the lilies of the field.

You know, how much more valuable we are. That's one of these promises. We are much more valuable than anything. We're made in God's image. That's how valuable we are to God.

So meditate on his purposes and his promises. Depend on God to help with all that you need for the next day. Going back to when you get up and you're stressed and all the pressures of the day come in on you.

Depend on God to help you. Lord, I need your help to get through this day. I haven't slept well. I need your help to get through it. You tell me you're with me all the time.

[20 : 53] And you need to be with me now. You need to be with me so I don't shout at my wife or shout at the kids or, you know, do something with somebody at work or wherever.

I need to depend on you. Be humble and have hope in a faithful God and not in eight hours sleep. You know, we do.

We can sometimes go, I've got to get my eight hours in, you know, seven at least, maybe six. Well, let's not get fixated on that. Let's be glad and be thankful for the sleep we get, whether we get ten hours, eight hours, six hours, but have hope in a faithful God.

God is faithful. Forever God is faithful, the song says, doesn't it? Forever God is faithful. God is a faithful God. Have hope in a faithful God.

Put your hope in a faithful God. Be humble and be firmly convinced that your soul is safe in God.

Verse eight says, I will lie down and sleep in peace for you alone, oh Lord, make me dwell in safety.

[22 : 01] Can you put the next slide up, please, Josh? Psalm 112 says, even in darkness, light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

Surely he will never be shaken. A righteous man will be remembered forever. He will have no fear of bad news. The heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure.

He will have no fear. In the end, he will look in triumph on his foes. And this really brings me to part three. I was lying this morning thinking about this morning and I'd woken quite early and I'm not one really for pictures and so on.

I sound like Veronica really now when I come to talk about pictures. She's wonderful with some of the pictures that she's given by God. But I had a strong picture this morning which involves George Bailey and a patchwork quilt.

Now, George Bailey, many of you will know from the film It's a Wonderful Life. Anybody who hasn't seen It's a Wonderful Life. Oh, yeah. One, two, three. Yeah, right.

[23 : 17] Yeah. It's usually shown at Christmas. You know, it comes on at Christmas and it's got a little bit of Christmas in it but actually it's quite a dark, dark tale of a man who is in danger of losing everything and who's contemplating suicide.

In fact, he makes the jump but his guardian angel rescues him and he says to his guardian angel, I wish I'd never been born. And so his guardian angel in order to make George see that maybe you know, God has a purpose for his life says, okay, you've never been born.

And he goes around his town and nobody recognizes him. Nobody knows him. Certain people who were never there. His friend who, his brother who became a heroic war pilot.

the people that he saved were all killed because he wasn't there. George Bailey's brother wasn't there to save them. And it made me think of a patchwork quilt as it does, you know.

My mother once made a patchwork quilt. I think they were all sort of six-sided little things, you know, sewn together, you know, that sort of thing. I'm sure some of you have made them.

Absolutely marvellous. But I was thinking of this patchwork quilt and I saw these red patches and then other coloured patches but the red ones were really bright and I got to thinking, yeah, we're like a patchwork quilt.

[24 : 46] Life is like a patchwork quilt. You know, there we are in our red patchwork. There we are as Christians. We're the red ones and we touch, you know, at least six other people and that goes out to more.

If you took us out of that quilt, if you took our patch out of that quilt, how many others would that affect? You know, yes, the immediate six but how many others?

How many people do we know or do we not know that maybe we've spoken to or said something, just said something in passing, just a word or prayed for?

And what difference might that have made? Might that have made if we'd not been there to say that? It really got me thinking this morning.

I had a really humbling experience in church nearly a couple of years ago now. Somebody came as a visitor to the church and I hadn't seen them for a long time and I recognized them and went over and this person said, oh, it's lovely to see you.

[25 : 58] I want to thank you because I don't think I would be here if it hadn't been for you. And I thought, that's very nice of you to say. And it turned out that this person had been out of work at one time and was looking to learn how to teach English.

And I was able to put them in touch. I said, well, I know people at Functional English, the language school that used to be in Whitby that taught English to overseas students. And I said, I can put you

in touch with somebody there.

I said, it's, you know, and I explained how it was a Christian language school and all the teachers there were Christians. Some of the other staff weren't, but it was always a given that the teachers were always Christians.

And so, I put her in touch, this person in touch with somebody at the language school and really, you know, never really thought much of it. Over the years, the years passed, suddenly, this person turns up, is now a Christian.

And, I think, yeah, George Bailey. You know, maybe if I hadn't been there, maybe somebody else would have spoken to that person, of course. But if I hadn't been there, maybe not.

[27 : 12] That's really humbling to think that. And then, I started to think about knowing our God, knowing our faith, knowing our scripture.

We need to know our God. This is the God who created the whole world and the universe. This is a God who created all that. Who gave us Adam, father of a great nation.

Who gave us Moses to lead the captives out of Egypt. Who gave us Jonah to do one specific task, to tell Nineveh to repent of their sins.

Who gave us Isaiah, who foretold the coming of Christ. Wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace, as it says in Isaiah.

Who gave us other prophets. Who gave us Jesus. Who decided that because his people were so unfaithful to him, he was going to offer the chance to everyone to come to know God.

[28 : 24] And how did he do that? Through his son, Jesus Christ. Who was born, a baby, who grew up, who lived, who ministered, and who was then put to death on a cross.

For nothing. He was an innocent man. But he conquered death and sin. God turned away from him while Jesus went into hell and conquered Satan for us.

And then, as we know, the great three days later, God raised him. The resurrection. And then, on from there, the great names of the New Testament, Peter, and Paul, and John, and so on through history.

Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Cranmer, Ridley, Tyndale, Calvin, Martin Luther, Wesley, Billy Graham, Bonhoeffer, C.S. Lewis.

On and on it goes. The names go on and on. You can go on and on with these names right through into modern days. There's Tim Keller, for example.

[29 : 43] John Piper. And others today. John Mark Comer. These are the people that God has put there and is sending out. So this is the God.

This is our God. And this is the God that we can have faith in that he is a great God. And we need to know our scripture. You know, whether that's the well-known scriptures that we can have recourse to.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believed in him should not perish but should have everlasting life. You know, in one sense, the simplest but most profound scripture of all.

The way to God. The way to God. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight.

in your sight. When a believing person prays, great things happen. Let's believe that.

[30 : 46] When a believing person prays, great things happen. And if we sin, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He'll set us back on the path again. This is our God. Let's get to know our God more and more and our faith and what it means to us and our scriptures so that we can recall those scriptures.

All the scriptures that each one of us will know. Some of us will know many. Some of us will know relatively few. Some of us may know very few indeed.

And it's for me, I don't find it easy to remember things. I really, really struggle. Anne will tell you. I absolutely struggle.

Anne can quote hymns and psalms and she was telling me this morning that when she was goodness knows how old, they had to learn the psalms off by heart. And I'm thinking, no, I can't do that.

[31 : 51] I mean, if God gives me the ability to do that, then yeah, I can do it. But I can't learn things off my heart like that. But some people can. But let's learn about our God and our faith and our scripture.