

Sermon 6-7 and 11, 2017 Psalm 4 Living the Joyful Life

Dear Joyful in the Lord:

Joy

We all desire “Joy” in our lives.

- The Bible tells us to “Rejoice in the Lord always...” Philippians 4:4
- Why then, aren’t we always joyful?

“So many churches, so many pastors and Christians have so little joy today...these are difficult times.” Matthew Harrison

Yet, the Bible speaks so often of Joy...

- In the Psalms of the Old Testament
- With the Prophets of the Old Testament
- In the Gospels of the New Testament
 - We find the joy at the manger in Bethlehem
 - We find joy at the resurrection of Jesus
- The Apostle Paul’s letters are filled with joy over life even in the midst of death

Why, then, so little joy at times among us?

Joy- robbers

In his book entitled Fearless author Max Lucado says that the fears in life rob us of our joy. He lists these common fears that beset us...

- Fear of not mattering
- Fear of not protecting our children
- Fear of overwhelming challenges
- Fear of worst-case scenarios
- Fear of violence
- Fear of what’s next
- Fear of life’s final moments

In the midst of enduring one of these “joy-robbers” have you ever asked the question “Where is the Lord in all of this?”

“The presence of troubles doesn’t surprise us. The absence of God, however, undoes us.” Max Lucado

Psalm 4 was written by King David of Israel who lived about 1000 years before Jesus was born. As King David wrote these words he was besieged with the “joy robbers” of...

- Suffering both physically and emotionally
- Injustice
- Oppression

Many Bible students and theologians believe David wrote this Psalm during the trials and struggles he faced with his son, Absalom.

David's son, Absalom had rebelled against him.

- Absalom wanted to take over as king of Israel by deposing of his father
- During Absalom's rebellion against his father, David was...
 - Humiliated
 - Surrounded by lies
 - Exasperated
 - Gloomy and depressed

Facing such pressure and stress would cause anyone of us to experience the same things.

Absalom was David's 3rd son with his wife, Maacah. II Samuel 3

Absalom was a troubled son.

- He killed his half-brother Amnon which brought grief to David
- He fled David's home after the murder which brought grief to David
- David was strongly attached to his son, Absalom and longed to see him even after all of this

After 3 years of separation King David sought to bring Absalom back to him.

- David forgave Absalom of what he had done
- David called for Absalom to return home
- The Bible says that David's "heart longed for Absalom" II Samuel 14

When Absalom returned home to Jerusalem and met with his father, King David, the Bible says: "Then the king summoned Absalom, and he came in and bowed down with his face to the ground before the king. And the king kissed Absalom." II Samuel 14

The people of Israel loved Absalom...

- He was handsome
- He looked like a king should look
- His popularity was on the rise
- "In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance...from the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him." II Samuel 14:25
- The Bible describes him with long flowing hair that weighed about 5 pounds.

But after a few years Absalom began to rebel against his father, David.

- He spoke against his father as king
- He sought the favor of the people by saying he could be a better king than his father
- This constant criticism of David went on for several years

The Bible says about Absalom: **"He stole the hearts of the men of Israel."** II Samuel 15:6

This conspiracy against David by his son continued for 4 years.

- Absalom influenced the leaders of Israel to join with him against his father
- David find out that some of his own men have sided with Absalom

- David decides to flee Jerusalem and says to those who supported him: “Come! We must flee, or none of us will escape from Absalom.” II Samuel 15
- David did not want to do battle with his son, Absalom, within the city of Jerusalem. Ps 3
- With King David gone from the city, Absalom moved into his father’s palace and set himself up as king of Israel.

At this point in his life, David was filled with: pressure, pain and persecution.

Prayer + Repentance + Praise

At this low point in his life, David comes before the Lord with: prayer, repentance and praise.

- David moves from anxiety to assurance as he travels down the road of prayer and trust in God
- David is seeking an inward peace in a horrible situation
- David is committing his situation to His Creator
- David had done this before as he faced the giant Goliath when he said: “The Battle is the Lord’s”

Psalm 4 is David’s prayer, repentance and praise to the Lord as he is fleeing the pressures and stresses of life.

Verse 1 **“Answer me when I call...”**

David prays to the Lord: “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.”

God is righteous and he is faithful and he is committed to his people. He is our Divine King to whom we may look for protection and redress in time of need and strength.

David says: “Give me relief” which in the Hebrew language means “Make a spacious place for me”

Lord, help me in this tight spot that is squeezing all the life out of me.

- Psalm 18 “He brought me out into a spacious place he rescued me because he delighted in me”
- The Lord will provide a way out for us when we are experiencing trial and duress I Cor 10:13
- David is crying out to the Lord “I am hard pressed”
 - I am in a tight spot
 - Paul says that he and the other apostles: “...go hungry and thirsty; we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless...we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.” I Cor 4:11ff

David, Paul and we cry out to the Lord: “God, I appeal to you...You uphold me and protect me.” Ps 5

God is our only source of real help

- The Koran of the Moslem faith sends you to Muhammad
 - Buddhists invite you to meditate
 - Spiritists tell you to levitate
 - A palm reader wants your hand
 - Some consults the stars; others read the cards
 - Agnostics don’t know if there is anyone to help
 - Atheists believe there is no one to help
- Max Lucado

David goes to the Lord...He, the Lord, is the only one who can help.

Verses 2 and 3 “Don’t give up on the Lord”

David knows that ultimately this whole matter is in God’s hands.

- David rebukes those who would turn away from God to seek relief from false gods.
- One well known musical artist said once: “Transcendental Meditation would take over the world.”

David says: “Don’t give up on the Lord...He will hear you...Believe in Him”

Lord – Yahweh – I AM THAT I AM

The center or anchor of our understanding, trust and hope in life is the Lord.

- The name “Lord” in the Hebrew is Yahweh
- Yahweh is the name of the Lord that describes his self-sufficiency
- It describes the Lord as the One who is our Anchor in life
- Our Anchor drawing us forward to the future...eternity despite our trials here and now

The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ accomplished all that we need...We are connected to Christ by faith through our baptism...which connects us to Jesus so that...

- His death for sin is ours
- His resurrection is ours
- He never had a beginning
- He never will have an end --- neither will we
- He is real
- He is constant
- He is truth
- He is faithful
- He is our Creator and Sustainer

“God determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live...For in Him we live and move and have our being.” Acts 17:26ff

We are sustained and kept secure from disruption, confusion and annihilation by Yahweh.

Our Lord is...

- The court of appeal when we are threatened or wronged Ps 62
- The mighty and faithful defender when we are defenseless Ps 46
- At home in our hearts John 14:23

The Bible says that God’s love for us “never fails” I Cor 13:8

- His love lasts forever
- His love never dies
- His love is at work in our lives

How are we to respond to the Lord’s love?

Verses 4 and 5 Confession and Adoration

- Confess our sins

Luther says: "Don't waste any time denying your sins."

David is the consummate saint/sinner in the Bible

- Wrote many of our Psalms
- Called a man after the Lord's heart
- Yet, caught up in a web of sex, lies and murder

Still, David wrote in Psalm 51 "Against You, You only have I sinned...Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

- Trust in the Lord's care and concern for us
- Worship Him
- Follow the Lord and His Word

Sometimes when we are under pressure or falsely accused by someone we are tempted to be quick in our response or become angry at the one who has caused us grief. At times like these we need to remember that God will be our Vindicator.

Psalm 62 "...my honor depends on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge...trust in him...pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."

Verses 6-8

David turns to praise the Lord even in the midst of his trial.

Who can show us any good?

Some of David's friends and advisors were questioning God's ways and care for David. They may have said something like: "David, what is God doing for you...we don't see anything good happening."

- Yet, David praises the Lord for the Lord's presence in his life
- David seeks the Lord's strength
- Let the light of your face, O Lord, shine upon us

In the face of this widespread uncertainty David prays for the Lord to bless him.

- When the Lord's face shines on a person, blessing and deliverance will come
- David's confidence in the Lord becomes a testimony to God's people
- We can be confident even in the storms of life

David's anxiety turns into a sense of security. David says: "We are safe in the Lord"

You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

- Enclosed in his strong embrace, we cannot be touched by any ill
- In him we are calm and safe as we tread the unknown way in life

In this world we may not find perfect peace...in fact, we will not find perfect peace...Acts 14:23

A retired couple wanted to find that one place on earth where there was no war or strife.

- They searched far and wide for their peaceful place
- They finally settled on the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina
- Here they were at peace... for a few months.

In the 1980's Great Britain and Argentina started a war over who owned the Falkland Islands.

The only true peace in this old sinful world is found in our souls where faith in the Lord resides.

- The Lord has defeated the archenemy of our souls
- We now dwell in safety spiritually, whether we are awake or asleep
- No haunting fear need mar the believer's sleep. We lie down with trust in His care.
- "Be not afraid...for the Lord is with you wherever you go."
- I Peter 5:7 "Cast all your anxiety on Him for He cares for you."

Martin Luther said: **"The Lord defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil."**

In the Lord we have joy.

"In Christ I do not despair, nor do I escape from reality. I am captive to the future because Jesus has a future. I am captive to joy --- my Anchor to the future.

Paul says: "I am overflowing with joy" II Cor 7:4

Prayer: Lord, grant me joy this day in your house, and cause that joy to abound in my home, until I shall rest in your eternal home. In Jesus' Name...Amen!