

- The next two Sundays are special...
- And today we continue in our short series through the Psalms. The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems and songs that capture all the highs and lows of life and helps us direct them into the presence of God. In reading them, we learn the balance of honesty and reverence, knowing the truth about ourselves and the truth about God. And this Psalm, Psalm 4, does just that. Psalm 4, like many Psalms, deals with one of the great challenges of life: how we deal with distress and worry, and how we can find rest

Psalm 4 NIV

Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.

Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

² How long will you people turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false gods^[b]?^[c]

³ Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.

⁴ Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.

⁵ Offer the sacrifices of the righteous
and trust in the Lord.

⁶ Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"
Let the light of your face shine on us.

⁷ Fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸ In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, Lord,
make me dwell in safety.

Winston Churchill “When I look back on all these worries, I remember the story of the old man who said on his deathbed that he had had a lot of trouble in his life, most of which had never happened.”

- It's a statement that raises a question: Why are we so worried?
- Let's be clear, we do care about things and should be concerned when it is warranted. We are not called to pretend like what's happening doesn't matter. **But worry is something different.** Worry is care gone wrong. Worry is what happens when we don't deal with distress in the right way. And that is why it's a problem.
- In fact, the old English meaning of the word means to strangle, to seize by the throat and tear. No wonder the Bible tells us not to worry.
- The Scottish Dr and Author, AJ Cronin spent years observing people in times of war and peace and observed that we tend to distress most about what we have least control over. He sorts it bluntly
- **“What are We Worried About?” Doctor A. J. Cronin**
 - **Real, legitimate concerns – 8%**
 - **Health-related worries – 12%**
 - **Petty, miscellaneous worries - 19%**
 - **Things that happened in the past that can't be changed 30%**
 - **Things that never happen – 40%**
- This really hits home for me...
 - I'm not competitive... but I could out-worry every one of you
 - I was asked recently to teach on worry... and then I got worried “Wait, does that mean they think I'm a worrier?”
 - Well, I am... which either makes me the *best* person to teach on this, or the *worst*. We'll see.... But I'm not worried about it.
- Now, in one sense, dealing with our distress is always an issue.
 - And yet, in another sense, life in 2021 fuels anxiety more than ever... more access to information than ever before. And there is also more attention to your life and the lives of others through social media, which can tend to feed worry.

- We're all aware of what is happening. But my question this morning is How are we processing it? And **How can we find rest?**
- This Psalm helps us. After all, King David, had a lot to worry about.
- This Psalm is written during a tragic moment in David's life. Though David was king of Israel, His own son, Absalom betrayed him, taking the throne and forcing his father into the wilderness. And to make matters worse, an army was sent after David to destroy him! And his honest cry gives us a window to his heart's turmoil. But it also shows us how he found rest in the middle of it all.
- It is very personal... but it is not private. It has been written down, placed in Scripture for our own instruction, that it might shape how we respond in our time of need. It is part of a larger set, often called "Prayers of help". And it helps us deal with what is happening in our hearts and minds before we go to sleep at night.
- King David found a way to deal with his distress and find rest. How? He prays **from** the heart, preaches **to** his heart and trusts **with** his heart. And if we are to find rest, we must do the same. First...

1. Pray **from** the Heart (v 1-2)

- a. The way to deal with fears and worries is *not* by pretending they don't exist. No. There is an emotional honesty to the cries of David that encourage us to pray from the heart.

V 1 "Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer."

- a. What did David do when he was faced with real danger, betrayal, displacement uncertainty?
- b. He is honest to God and honest about his need. Literally, "Please pay attention to me! I am asking for help!"
- c. "I need room! I am in a situation of distress and I feel claustrophobic." He is honest about his emotional state.
- b. He is also honest about his circumstances!

V 2 How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

- a. The source of his pain were the lies and vain words of his enemies who slandered his reputation!
- b. And he is honest about the shame that came with it all.
- c. And in many ways, we relate. What do we need to do? Psalm 4, like many others, serves as a model for us. We must pray, and pray from the heart with emotional honesty.
- d. And I suppose this corrects us from two errors. One error is to suppress our emotions. But another is to *serve* our emotions.
- e. **Do we suppress our emotions?** Some of us ***ignore*** our feelings
 - i. Stiff upper lip may have served us well at sometimes...
- f. **Do we serve our emotions?** Some of us ***obey*** our feelings
 - ii. They act as the primary source for our decision making!
 - iii. We should not obey them. However, we must be careful not to the mistake of ignoring them!
- g. **The Bible enables us to steward our emotions.**
 - iv. After all, Look at Jesus! He grieved over sin, rejoiced over good, he was angered by unbelief, delighted at faith, he wept over death, had compassion towards need.
 - v. If God uses emotional language, why wouldn't we?
 - vi. **But...** unlike God, our emotions are affected by sin.
 - vii. Sin, which is rebellion against God and disconnection from him, has distorted our design, including our emotions... We over-feel, We under-feel
- h. Emotions are given to us as a gauge, not a guide. (Car)
 - i. So how do we steward our emotions? We are honest about our situations, our concerns our worries, and bring them into the presence of God through prayer. (Some need to hear this!)
 - j. Come like a child. God does not ask us to get our interior life together before we come to him! Pray from the heart!
 - k. But praying from the heart is not only the way we find rest.

2. Preach to Your Heart (V 3-4)

- a. David knows it's not enough simply to express from the heart. Nor does he believe, as many do today, that how his heart is handling his worry is automatically correct!
- b. Our emotions might be a gauge, but the Word of God is our guide! We need truth. In verse 3, David begins to preach... to *his* heart as well as the hearts of others.

V 3 Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

- a. He is reminding himself and others about who we are praying to! He is the Lord. My accusers are not the authority! God is!
- b. My circumstances do not determine my purpose, God does!
- c. When I look at my accusers and my problems in the light of who God is, it begins to lessen in their impact!
- d. BUT... that is not all... vs 4-5 we must
- e. The words we find in verses 4-5 contain instructive, protective measures, making sure that we do not become like the very people who brought us into our trial in the first place.

V 4 Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

- f. It is so easy in the middle of a trial to be so focused on our suffering or on our enemies that we do not realize what is happening to us. We must not only express our hearts, we must examine our hearts with the truth. While it is good to be emotionally honest, I must confess that I am prone to error.
- g. If you want to find rest, preach the truth of God's word to your heart! And confess any wrong or sin the truth reveals!
- h. In his confession we see emotional honesty + biblical integrity.
- i. Vs 4 The word tremble, means to be provoked, angry
 - There is a right kind of anger, which is actually rooted in love. Its called righteous anger.
 - i. But, notice, it says be angry and do not sin!
 - ii. Often times beneath our anger over a circumstance is a dissatisfaction **with** God which keeps us **from** God

- iii. And this leads to another temptation...
- c. Take an honest look at how you are responding to your worries and troubles! And do it before the end of the day!
- j. Please friends, preach to your hearts! Rehearse the truth!
- k. If you don't, you will not see your need for God and you will quickly become like the very people who have hurt you.
- l. The truth leads us to confession. And far from defeating us, confession protects us! Preaching God's word to your heart, remembering who you are praying to and confessing what he wants to remove is like taking medicine before bed!
- m. He expresses his heart. He examines his heart. WE need both.
- n. Religious people tend to ignore the heart. Suppressing what happening inside! The Psalms might make them blush!
- o. Modern people tend to ignore the truth. Serving our natural reactions as if they were the authority. The Psalms make them blush as well!
- p. We need to pray **from** the heart... and preach **to** the heart.
- q. But there is one more step to finding rest.

3. Trust *with* Your Heart (v 5-8)

- a. It's one thing to know the truth. Its another thing to trust the truth. Its here that David declares the importance of making the decision to roll the responsibility for governing your life away from yourself and to the Lord.

V 5 "Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the Lord."

- b. Of myself, I cannot deal with my worries, my fears, my distress.
- c. But you might say "Well, how can I trust that good will come when I trust God?
- d. That's what the people surrounding David were asking!

V 6a Many, Lord, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"

- e. What good will it do to trust God with your heart? Well, let's ask David what good it did for him!
- f. While there are many ways that God meets us when we trust him in our worried state of mind, but David reminds us of 3.

g. What are the benefits of trusting him in your worry?

h. God gives you the only approval that matters

V 6b Let the light of your face shine on us.

- i. He was worried and tormented about the people who shamed him. But God assures him of his favour and does for you!
- j. See, so many of us, the words we hear, the lies, the slander hurts so deeply because we often look to those people and their opinions for our sense of self.
- k. But David is able to experience rest because he has the approval of God! "His face shines on me!"
- l. Because in the end, his approval is the only opinion that matters! And when you know you are loved and approved by God, it changes everything about the rejection you face in the world.
- m. Today, trust that God's approval is what your heart needs!

n. God gives you a joy that that success can never give and failure can never take

V 7 Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

- a. "When the grain and wine abound" is a picture of the harvest of hard work. For many people, their joy comes when their work pays off. But it is temporary. Unpredictable.
- b. But, in contrast, David is saying that his joy supercedes what a worker in this world could ever experience.
- c. See, in verses 7 great contrast is made. The contrast is between what you can achieve through work or what you receive as a gift.
- d. Joy you need is not achieved, it is received! It's a gift of God!
- e. See, one of the reasons we live in worry is because we are finding our joy in what we can achieve! The problem is, even if you get some joy from success in your efforts, then you lose it when you fail! Its why many of us are so up and down! (team)
- f. See, Christian joy is a joy that success can never give you and failure can never take from you!

- g. He declares that his source of joy is beyond what he or anyone else can manufacture. It is literally a gift of God!
- h. **God gives you a security that is greater than your circumstances**

V 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

- i. Here, David describes a security *beyond* his circumstances.
- j. Notice, rest doesn't come because his enemies stopped, or his circumstances changed!
- k. He is able to rest because he knows that if his trust is in the Lord, then he is in the safest place in the world.
- l. If God is truly the source of our security... then I am just as protected in my time of trouble as I ever was in times of blessing. And what is the believer's security?

m. The bad things will turn out for good; the ultimately good things can never be taken away from you; and the best things are yet to come.

- How can we know? Because Jesus fulfils the promise of the Psalms. And how Jesus does it, models the lessons of Psalm 4.
- When Jesus came, he prayed from the heart!
- When he enters the garden of G., he knows the cross awaits him. And when he prays He brings the full weight of distress

Matthew 26:38-39 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

- It is SO important to see this! He doesn't pretend, ignore.
- He expresses. But then what? He surrenders.
- With perfect honesty and integrity, with tears and with truth... Jesus went all the way to the cross... to save us from the one thing we should ultimately fear! The judgment of God for our sin. He took our place.

- And on that day, he faced the darkness of rejection so we could have the light of God's favor, he was filled with sorrow over sin so that we could have the gift of joy, and he faced the destruction of judgment so that we could have everlasting security.
- So complete and powerful is the gospel of Jesus that the Apostle Paul could rattle through a list of worst-case-scenarios and distresses in life and not be shaken!

Romans 8:33-35, 37 "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

- And when you know that... You can sleep at night.
- Ask God to shine a light on what is really exhausting you. Name it, and come to him for rest.
- *Concerned about your reputation?* His acceptance gives you rest
- *Angry because you've lost control?* His sovereignty gives you rest
- *Burdened by a guilty conscience?* His forgiveness gives you rest
- *Worried about being lonely?* His Spirit is with you... right now.
- *Distressed by opposition?* His protection gives you rest.
- Pray from your heart. Preach to your heart. And trust God with your heart by trust in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- We need to "pray" these promises in! Pray them back to God!