

“Freedom from the Fear of Man”

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Series: *Psalms*

Bible Text: Psalm 4

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So as Don had mentioned, we're going to start today in summer in the Psalms. It's something that if you've been here for a while, you have heard us do in the past, but it's been about three or four years now, and so we're coming back to it again.

The Psalms, of course, are the hymns of the church. This is the poetry of David and several other authors, and one beautiful thing about the Psalms is that throughout their entirety, you run the full gamut of the human emotions. There is joy. There is gratitude. There is thanksgiving. There is mourning. There is lament. There is anger and violence and frustration and anxiety and worry, and one of the beautiful things about poetry often works in the same way as music is that it sort of gets under the skin in a different kind of way than just speaking out loud, right, the way that music can kind of touch you in a way that words alone can't, and so we're going to spend the entire summer there, and as Don had mentioned, we'll start off with Psalm 4.

Psalm 4 written by David. It says it at the very beginning, dealing really with the great big subject of what it means for us to live in a world in which we want to fear God, and yet face to face we often find ourselves fearing man, so join with me. You can either open in your scriptures or it's there printed in your bulletin as well as we read together Psalm 4.

To the choir master with stringed instruments, a psalm of David, answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer. O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame? How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah. But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself. The Lord hears when I call to him. Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. Selah. Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. There are many who say, who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace, I will both lie down and sleep. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

This is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God. Let's open with prayer.

Father, as we come to you this morning, we know that generations upon generations since this psalm was first penned, Lord, our brothers and sisters in Christ have uttered these same exact words, Father. We don't come to the text with brand new fresh eyes today, Lord God, but standing on the shoulders of those who have had this very prayer on their lips, answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Father, as we prayed at our opening today, you are the God who hears. You are the God that draws close to us, Father, and we recognize that we live in between the now and the not yet. We receive the fullness, Lord, of the kingdom in our midst, and yet it is not fully come yet, and in that space, Lord, we ask you to come. Would you come and comfort our hearts, quiet our minds, Lord God, help us to hear your word afresh and anew. By your spirit, Lord, would you empower us to live it out. Father, if there's anything that I say today that is false, would it just simply fall away from people's minds? But whatever is true, Lord, that it would remain, that it would take root into our hearts, Lord, where it would plant a seed, bear fruit, and that you would send us out again as a people who fully understand, fully know, and want to share the great news of the gospel because we have seen Jesus as he is today, high and lifted up in our midst, Lord. That is what we need today. We pray these things in the name of Christ. Amen.

I just recently finished up a podcast series. Some of you probably have heard it as well. You've mentioned it to me, but it's a new podcast produced by the same people who had done the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, that popular podcast from a couple years ago. This one is called The Devil in the Deep Blue Sea, and if you're familiar with it, if not, highly recommend it. It takes a deep dive into the phenomenon of the 80s and the 90s in the evangelical church, commonly referred to as the "satanic panic". I'm not going to talk about that today, but one of the things that was really interesting about it is there was a breakout session in the middle of the podcast series where they had an interview with the producer of it, and they asked what I wanted to know as well. Where did you get that title? The Devil in the Deep Blue Sea. He said it's actually a sailing term, so I'm going to butcher this a little bit, but it's okay. He kind of butchered it. Neither one of us are sailors, so if I get this wrong, correct me later, but he said in essence, it comes from the times where boats were made of wood, and that the way that all of the wood was held together was with a big strip of a beam of wood around the top, and that was referred to as the devil. I don't know why. He didn't know why, but that's what it was called. There was a particular man on the ship, a naval officer, whose role it was to periodically to be lowered down, upside down, over the bow to re-tar and re-pitch the devil so that water wouldn't get in, and what was happening is that the ship was moving the entire time at great speed, and so all they were looking at while they were doing it was the deep blue sea, all right, and so that was the common phrase "stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea". Doing something I have to do, right, it has to be done. We're going to die. The ship is going to fill up with water. I must do this task, and yet even as I do it, I recognize that there is great peril if I fail.

And I've thought about that a lot this week, and he talked even himself about all the different metaphors and analogies and ways that that can be connected to our spiritual life, but one in particular for me is it summarizes for so many of us what it looks like for us to live in the physical world, that we are a people that come week after week, and our desire is to truly know God,

love God, and fear him, and yet we are physical beings living in a physical world, and our temptation so often is to fear men instead, but that's our struggle.

That's our battle. Every single day, honor God and be shamed by men or honor man and lose God, and it's that constant tension, and I think David is highlighting exactly that, that David, this is at a time in David's life where, to talk about the context a little bit, he's either running from Absalom, his son who's trying to kill him, or King Saul. People aren't exactly sure, but it's certainly during a time in his life where he is literally running for his life, and he is a man who is in great power, and yet he gets to experience none of that. He is mocked, he is shamed, he is chased, he's pursued, and if he is caught, he will be killed, stuck between a rock and a hard place, we might say, or between the devil and the deep blue sea.

His fear of God, his desire to be faithful, to continue to obey God, love his law, and continue to live out his life before the Lord, or give in to the mobs and give them what they want. Between what others say about him and think about him, or who he knows who he is based on what God has said, will he submit to God or man?

Quick sermon today in some regards, maybe quick for Steve Woodworth, maybe not quick compared to others, but quicker than I am. Two points, the problem and the solution, right? The problem and the solution. What is David highlighting for us? What is our common problem together, and then what is the solution?

The problem

He begins this psalm with this very heartfelt, deeply honest demand.

Answer me when I call, oh God of my righteousness.

It's not a question. He didn't say, will you answer me? Can you answer me? Please answer me. He says, *answer me when I call*. And this idea of him saying that you are the *God of my righteousness*, we have just been in the book of Romans, and so we've got a certain category for righteousness. We've been talking about righteousness in a very specific way for the past few months, and you're going to have to put that aside for a moment because this is David using the word righteousness in the Hebrew term. So we're not talking about justification or imputed righteousness. He is speaking very specifically about his righteous acts.

You are the God of my righteousness, that David is a man who is upholding God's laws. He's living under God's standards. It is his faithfulness towards God in ruling over his people. David is just. David is merciful. David is honoring God. As one of the commentators said, it was his righteous rule. His divine kingship was part of what it meant for David to be a righteous man, the biblical understanding of what it means to be righteous, to live uprightly. That's what David's talking about. And David's reminding God, and he's reminding himself, and he's reminding us that God alone is his vindicator here. God alone is his vindicator. Despite whatever else people might think of his actions, no matter how much they slander him, mock him, laugh at him, talk

behind his back, he is saying to himself and to God, remember, you know me. You see me. You watch what's going on in my life. And what David is enduring, he pours out his heart before God. What is it exactly that David is facing? He lists them out for us here.

The first point, he says, *my honor has been turned to shame*. That's one of the things that I'm facing right now from these crowds, that my honor has been turned to shame. And honor there is the same word as glory. We talk about it all the time, about what it means in the Hebrew sense that glory is weight, worth, value, right? We speak of God and his glory, it is weight, it is his worthiness. And for David, it means his status, his royal dignity. And because of that, he says, because I am your anointed, I am now in the cross hairs of the people. The thing that should have brought me honor, being chosen by you, living faithfully as your ambassador to your people is the very thing now that's bringing me shame. My honor is bringing me shame. David's status is the very reason people are taking him down.

And I would say this, that this is a key aspect of what it means to live in a fallen world. For every single one of us, you don't have to be King David to have experienced that in your own life. We are, as a people, deeply insecure. We're incredibly jealous. We're fiercely rebellious, as a people, down to our core. We don't want anyone or anything to have any authority over us at all. We don't want to see anyone receive praise or promotion unless it's me, right? If we're going to go after anyone, I guarantee you this, in any of the situations of our life, it's not going to be the janitor, it's not going to be the administrative assistant, it's not going to be the volunteer, is it? We go after the CEO, we go after the chairman of the board, the president, the senior pastor.

If you're a leader in this room, you already know that's part of the job, right? You get that, you know that, and if you don't, you should. You get authority, you get power, you get all the responsibility. You make the big bucks, some of you, and the buck stops with you. But I think there's also something much deeper here for every single one of us, regardless of whether or not you're in a leadership position.

Following Christ in a world that despises him, has always been, is always going to be costly.

Always, for every single one of us, in little ways, big ways, we live in such a way as to honor God. If we do that faithfully, day in and day out, it will inevitably bring shame into your life. Not from God, but from others, and that's the rub.

Honor God, and risk losing my status in the eyes of men, or honor man and lose God.

That's what it means to live between the devil and the deep blue sea for us. You can't serve both masters, and so we're being taught day in and day out, right? You live in this real world. We're being taught every single day that the very things that are honorable to God are now somehow, by the culture we lived in, become shameful things. And you know this, if you've tried to be faithful to God.

That you're taught to be ashamed to be a virgin or save yourself for marriage.

You're taught to be ashamed if you have a clear biblical view of gender and sexuality.

If you desire to be a generous person, recognizing that your money and your possessions, that they're not yours, but they're a gift from God to be shared with others.

Being sober, serving, the idea that you would not consider yourself better than others, but you would be looking to the needs of others before yourself.

All of those kind of things can get you mocked in this world. It's not the mantras that we live by. It certainly isn't what the marketers have told us for years. And the very thing that you're trying to do to bring honor to God can bring you shame.

Reality is, we do live in an age where everything right now is being politicized, isn't it? And so this is a caution for us as we think about these things. There's not only a woke left, but very much a woke right, right? It seems like increasingly, especially if your job is to stand up and tell everybody how to live their lives every week, that there is almost no minefield that you cannot step on every single week. Every single word is being judged. Every single motive is being judged on both sides. Doesn't matter where you stand, no matter what you say or think, opposition and rebuke are seen as a badge of honor these days, aren't they? We're proud of that. We've come to believe that when everyone is against me, I must be the only one who is right. And that the more people hate me, the more I'm convinced I must be standing for the truth. That's the caution here in this. So God's name gets used for everything these days, doesn't it?

God's for Palestine and God's for Israel.

God's for capitalism, God's for socialism.

God's for war and God's for pacifism.

God is for immigrants and God is for closed borders.

God's for a particular form of educating your kids, a particular parenting style.

God wants everyone to get married or God wants everyone to stay single.

God is pro-life and God is pro-choice.

God says homosexuality is a sin. Others say God not only condones it, but he blesses it.

Name your issue and you'll find someone who claims God is on their side. Everyone thinking, I'm trying to honor God with my life and I'm getting shamed for it. And in that kind of environment, God calls us again and again to be a people of wisdom. Very difficult. And that the Bible tells us that wisdom comes from above and that we are to be a people who are

transformed continually by the renewing of our minds. And if we're honest, what most of our minds are being transformed by is not the Word of God, but a 24-hour news cycle and podcasts and YouTube and social media.

And so the question for each of us is we consider when we wonder if our fear of man and our fear of God might be out of whack. That's the key question today. Is your fear of God and your fear of man totally out of balance? It's simply to ask, who are you listening to more? Who has your ear right now? Who is influencing you the most? Who are you allowing to mold your thinking? Friends, let's be honest, we only have so many hours in a day, right? Who are you spending them with?

And in the midst of this inner turmoil, the mob calling for David's head, he cries out to God. And he says, I need you to answer me. I need you to answer me, God. I need to hear from you. And that is our question. Is that where we're running? Is that where we're going in our confusing times, if our struggles between honoring God, honoring man? We're really running to God and like David saying, I come to you. I need to hear from you.

Secondly, David says, I'm surrounded by people who *love vain words and they seek after lies*. That word vain, it's the Hebrew word for empty, like a vapor. They're meaningless, empty words. And our struggle between God and man, we're faced with a world that is constantly giving you what David would say, empty promises and lies, empty promises and lies. Satan is called the father of lies repeatedly throughout the scripture, in fact, so much so that that is his native tongue. He's described as one who every single time his mouth opens, all he can do is speak lies.

And friends, when we hear these lies, we recognize them. They ring true because so often they are the same exact lies we have been telling ourselves for years. And David says, he goes further, he says, not only are these things coming to us like we're victims, these lies, these empty words, he says, we seek after them. We go after them. We pursue them. We want what we want and all we need is the right kind of justification to quiet our consciousness. So we go after them. We look for lies.

And so when we hear from the world that the purpose of our life is to be happy, we agree. We agree. We've been telling ourselves that for years.

When we're told that people will not possibly love you if your body's not a certain shape or size, we agree.

We're told that no one will respect us if we don't have the right degree or the right title or the right job. We say that's absolutely correct.

When we're told that our personal value is tied directly to the value of our possessions, we fully accept it.

If you believe that your worth as a parent is tied directly to how your kids turned out, you didn't hear that from God, people. You heard it from the world and you bought it and I bought it hook, line, and sinker.

You heard that you are in control of your life,

that you deserve to have your needs met,

that you are unwanted if you are single.

Your marriage should be a fairy tale.

Your kids will turn out perfect if you just follow the right plan.

All of these things, lies, lies, and more lies, and they're the lies that run our lives.

Here's my primary contention for most of us in this room. So many of our struggles, so many of our addictions, so many of our failures, so many of those besetting sins that continue to plague us again and again are not because we fear God so little, but because we fear man too much. We listen to their lies and we believe them.

You know how I know this? Here's a diagnostic that all of us can use. This has been true in my own life. We see it every single day, that we have as a people no problem whatsoever confessing our sins to God. Sins that we would never in a million years ever confess to another person. We will approach the living God, who again, just to remind you, perfect, blameless, the only one who is actually able to condemn you to life or death. That God, we will come to him and we will confess to him with no problem at all the very worst thing we have ever done in our lives. But we will look at another human being in the eye, another human that is equally as sinful, stands under that same exact judgment as God, and never once ever confess that sin to them, because we fear man more than we fear God. Because we're scared to death, we're utterly controlled not by what God thinks of us, but by the opinions of other people, aren't we?

We know God doesn't care how much money we make, right? We know that. We know God isn't going to love me more because of the car I drive or the square footage of our house, but we know other people will. We know that our God is loving, we know that our God is gracious, merciful, and forgiving. We also know other people aren't. And so we live each day. It's on this balance beam constantly between the devil and the deep blue sea. We're trying to be faithful to God, and simultaneously we are scared to death of other people. Knowing at the end of each and every day, we're confronted by the question, which master did you serve today? The benevolent king, the one who promises to never leave or forsake you, or the people in your life whose opinion of you changes as often as the weather.

The counselor and author Ed Welch put it this way, he said, his self-esteem is a recurring theme for you. Chances are that your life revolves around what others think. Your reverence or your

fear of their opinions. You need them to buttress your sense of well-being and identity. You need them to fill you up. However you put it, the fear of man can be summarized this way, we replace God with people. And if that's you today. If you recognize this internal battle inside of you, I assume that it's virtually all of us, isn't it? Certainly is me. I didn't write this sermon, I didn't think about this subject this week with you in mind. It was very easy to write because it's what I have lived through. It's what I am living through. It's the same battle that goes on in my own heart week after week. Let's ask the question then, what's the cure? That's the reality of where we're living day in and day out.

What is the solution to that?

David tells us, the God who does not lie, who does not manipulate, the God who does not change from day to day, the God who knows you better than you know yourself, the God who made you, the God who died for you, offers you an invitation to be his son or daughter. That God gives you his peace, he gives you his presence, his pleasure, and his protection. For P's, so you guys can remember it. Okay? His peace, presence, pleasure, protection.

First David says, you alone God are the one who gives me peace. *You have given me relief when I was in distress.* Given me, notice he says, given me, past tense, right? Past tense. David cries out to God for relief, does so with the boldness of experiencing God's faithfulness time and time and time again in his life. It is the biblical call, once again, remember, remember.

Proof of God's faithfulness in the future is the faithfulness he has shown you in the past.

But man, we are so prone to forget. We are all like goldfish, which I hear have a memory of about 10 minutes or so, right? It's more than that, Heather? Is it a day? It's less than, oh, it's a minute. Oh, it's a minute, three minutes, okay, I'm getting all, it's not a very long time, whatever it is. We're all goldfish. That as soon as we go through something, right, like we're in the heart of the battle, so we're going through this great distressing moment, we cry out to God. We ask right away, Lord, Lord, Lord, would you come, would you rescue me? He gets us through that crisis, and then as soon as the next one comes, where do we find ourselves again? I wonder if he's going to come through this time? Our worry comes back, our catastrophizing, everything, and for some of us, this has been going on for 20, 30, 40, 50 years he's been faithful to us, and still, when the next crisis comes, we say, I don't know, maybe I've run out of opportunities with him. Maybe he won't come through this time.

We're prone to forget, and in that distrust about the character of God, that is where temptation begins to set in. We look around us, and we ask the question out loud sometimes,

why me and not them?

Why am I suffering? They're happy.

Why do they get the perfect family?

Why do they get financial security?

Why are they so beautiful? I wish I had their spouse, their kids, their vacations.

Why am I the one who's still single?

Why do I have to be the one who gets sick?

Why is God holding out on me?

As President Roosevelt said, "*comparison is the thief of joy*", and when that thief comes, our hearts and minds, they listen to the lies of the world, as David had just told us, instead of turning to God, and we grab ahold of anything at all that we believe can bring us exactly what we want. All of us, we are like the story in Genesis, Abraham and Sarah, and the promise of a child, and instead of waiting on God's faithfulness and timing, Sarah brings to Abraham, her husband, another woman, and says, sleep with her and give me a kid.

David says, you have given me relief when I was in distress, that no matter what promises the world has made, that in the end, every single one of them has proven to be a lie. None of them have delivered what they promised. Only you have been the one to give me relief.

So God promises his peace, and also, David says, his presence. *The Lord hears when I call to him*, that he is close, that he is imminent, not just transcendent, but he knows me by name.

I shared a quote the other night when we were together at our monthly prayer time, always begin with a bit of a devotional thought, just to prepare our hearts to think about prayer in the right way, and this week, I drew on one of my favorite books on prayer by a man named Bingham Hunter, it's called *The God Who Hears*, a great book, recommend it highly, but in that, he says at one point, "*God does not respond to our prayers, God responds to us, our whole life*". And what Bingham was talking about there is this very idea that somehow, when we come into the prayer time with God, that we think that somehow, that's just an isolated moment with him, that it doesn't connect to all that we are, all that we've done, right? All of our hypocrisy, that we can live our lives any way that we want to, and somehow, we come before God, and we can fool him into believing that we're somebody that we're not. He said, God does not respond to your prayers, he responds to you, to you as a person, because he himself is a person as well, right? We serve a personal God who is alive, who is able to hear us, able to respond, interact in the moment with us, God is not a vending machine, David reminds us, that we turn to when we're hungry and desperate. God is a personal God, a relational God, and prayer is not the words that we say before a meal, before we go to bed, or after we close up our quiet time in the morning. It includes your very life, all of you, God sees you, he knows you intimately, he responds to you when you call him, he recognizes your voice. Let that sink in for a minute, he recognizes your voice. Absolutely nothing else that you turn to when the chips are down is listening at all.

God also gives us his pleasure. Meets the desires of our hearts. In verse six, David says, *there are many who say, who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, oh Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

It's no secret to suggest that the entire culture of marketing is designed to make you feel less than. Whatever it is, that without this product, how could you possibly respect yourself? How could others possibly love you? They tell you constantly how you should spend your money, your free time, and they tell you what you produce, and what you drive, and what you wear, and what you live, is all that matters. I've wondered sometimes, what would our advertisements look like if they were actually honest? If they went far enough, and I've always, regardless of whatever you think of Saturday Night Live, one thing that they have done particularly well over the last 50 years is these parody commercials. You've probably seen them before, which in many ways are just honest. They're just honest commercials. One of my favorite from the last year makes fun of those Christmas to remember, the Lexus commercials. I don't know if you saw this one. It's fantastic. Everything sounds the same, looks the same. This great little family, they're having their Christmas celebration, and the wife opens up the small box from the husband, takes off the top, and it's keys to a Lexus. The husband smiles, and everybody runs outside, and he stands in front of the Lexus with the big red ribbon over the top of it. She looks at him, and she says, are you kidding me? Did you buy a car without talking to me? She said, you haven't had a job for four months. We've all had that thought, like how does that happen on Christmas morning? You just show up with a \$100,000 car for your wife. Honest commercials, right? They just don't go far enough.

I tell people in my counseling sessions fairly often that that really is the problem with so many of our different fantasies and our visions of the good life is we don't go far enough. We don't play them out all the way to the end. We don't see them all the way through because our fantasies and our dreams, you know what they never include when we're thinking about them? They never include the consequences. They always stop short of that. Just the promise of whatever it is that your heart wants without ever thinking it all the way through, what are the consequences? I tell people, keep going. Keep going with that fantasy. What comes next? What comes the next day? What comes the next week? What happens then? What happens to your job? What happens to your marriage? Just keep going. Go all the way through.

The last thing an advertisement for alcohol wants you to think about is a hangover or a DUI, right?

Porn sites don't want you to ever consider destroying your marriage.

Hundreds of online gambling sites don't want you to ever stop and think about your financial ruin.

Drug companies that promise you the perfect body overnight don't want you to think about long-term issues to your health. They all say, get what you want right now. Let your future self, think about the future.

David lives in the real world too. He's watching just as we are watching the lives of others without a care in the world. They are his neighbors. They are his co-workers. They are his subjects in his own kingdom. We have family members and friends who bought the lie that we exist only to serve ourselves and to achieve the ultimate God of our age, happiness. David says, I have watched them and instead I choose joy.

So what's the difference? Joy and happiness. David says, I have more joy than when their grain and wine abound. Happiness is temporary. It's in the moment. I was actually reading an article by the New York columnist David Brooks this week where he was talking about the difference between the two. He says, happiness usually involves a victory for the self. Joy tends to involve the transcendence of self. Happiness comes from accomplishments. Joy comes when your heart is in another. And the illustration he gave was that he was at a graduation and he said, those graduates walked across the stage for their own achievements. They were truly happy, right? They had done it. They had finished. And he said, but the parents who watched their children cross the stage, they were experiencing joy, something deeper.

In our spiritual lives, happiness is celebrating what I have accomplished. Joy is unfading peace, undeniable satisfaction in experiencing the unchangeable truths about who God is and what he has done for you. David says, you might be happy today when your grain and wine abound, but what about tomorrow when they both run out? Then where are you? Friends, you and I will find ourselves in a constant state of fear and anger and frustration and worry and anxiety if all you are pursuing in this life is happiness. It's always dependent on how much you have accomplished, how many of your needs are being met, whether or not the people around you are meeting your expectations. You will be a drain to yourself and to every single person in your life because everybody will be around you as a means to an end and nothing more.

What David says here is that because joy is rooted in what God has done and what God says is true about you, it cannot be shaken, friends. It is unmovable. It is fixed. It does not waver. It holds firm. No matter the circumstances of your life, even if you find yourself like David on the run from your own son who's trying to kill you, he says, I have joy because even those kinds of circumstances cannot move me off the foundation of who God is and what he has said is true about me. Happiness is chasing after the wind. My caution would be, do not be surprised if that is you, that your life really does feel a bit like a hurricane sometimes.

Finally, God gives us his protection. David says *in peace I will both lie down and sleep for you alone make me dwell in safety*, and it's connected to what he said earlier when he says put your trust in the Lord. Safety, trust, the protection of God. That is not just coming down from above but it is me in return recognizing who God is and putting my trust in him fully.

Not just my faith but my trust, all of me putting it on him.

Here is our struggle with that. I've said this so many times from here and every conversation I've had. Tim Keller before he passed said that *"the struggle with the Christian life is so often God is*

on audio and the world is on video". God is on audio and the world is on video for us. Meaning this, that God is the theoretical. God is the ideas. But what I experience in the world, that is true. That is real. And so because of that, we struggle. We struggle for any of these things that we're saying about God today to be true for us. Because we're honest, right?

Maybe your parents did let you down.

Maybe you've had friends stab you in the back.

Maybe you had a mentor, a boss who let you down.

Maybe you thought a romantic relationship would solve all your problems and then that person broke your heart, betrayed you.

You thought your spouse would answer all of your doubts. The marriage got cold or loveless.

Maybe your spouse stopped moving towards Jesus, gave up spiritually.

Maybe there was an addiction that arose in the family.

So we say, well, maybe it'll be my kids. My kids will finally meet all of my needs, my pursuit of happiness. They'll be my purpose. And then they rebelled against your training. They rejected the faith. They just went off the rails, right?

Because of all those things, we come to God and we even hear this Psalm today very jaded and very cynical. Because God has only been on audio and the world has been on video. You've grown jaded. You've made a concrete coffin around your heart. You have said no more, even to God. You're not interested anymore. You're here. You're checking the box. You'll keep coming week after week, but you will not get close to him and you certainly will not let him get close to you. God tells me that he is for me and that he won't reject me and he will protect me. But for some of us in here, the world has showed you just the opposite.

Many of you know my story. I'm not going to rehash it here, but one of the most helpful counselors I ever met with sort of breaking through this stuff after marriage, after children, he looked at me and he said, Steve, you've got to let go of the mantra. And I said, what mantra is that? He said, you have told yourself in your heart, I will not bleed again. And because you have been so afraid to let people in, to ever experience emotion, you're also denying yourself of the very thing that your heart wants the most, which is love and acceptance, unconditional relationships. He said, you can't get it anymore because you denied yourself both.

And so I think it is not a theoretical question for you today when David himself in this psalm says, who will do good for me? People are asking that question. Who is going to do good for me? Who can I trust? Who will protect me? And what David is calling each of us to today is he's saying, flip that script.

For every single one of us who recognizes that we really have lived a life in which God was on audio and the world was on video, David's saying, flip the script.

What would it look like for all of us in this room today to live in the opposite sort of way where God was on video and the world was on audio?

What would change in your life if we feared God more than man, and that who I was and who he is was more true than what I experienced in the world?

What would that take?

What does David show us in this psalm?

First and foremost, it would take stopping, stopping looking at Jesus as a transaction. For so many of us, myself included for years and years of my life, my relationship with Jesus was nothing more than what started and stopped with a prayer to him. At a summer camp, a prayer for salvation. I did my job. Thanks for doing yours, Jesus. That was it. It was the beginning, but it was not the end, and it took great mentors in my life and God himself by the Spirit showing me more, higher up, deeper in, calling me further. David reminds us that he cries out to God. He is running for his life. He is not talking to an idea. He is not talking to a wish stream. He is not talking to a doctrine, to a belief system, to a religion. He is talking to a person. The living God who knows him personally. And David is inviting each and every single one of us to understand the purpose of our salvation is not just eternal life. It's not, friends.

Union with God.

That is what we are called to. That is what we were saved for. Union with God. Caught up in the divine life of the Trinity. Eternal, relational, forever. And if you don't believe me, listen to this. You probably have read this maybe a hundred times, but I've been mentoring a young man for a couple years, and we just spent a whole time just looking at this passage, trying to grasp its depth. But Jesus, before he goes, the high priestly prayer of John 17, he's talking to his disciples and he's praying for them. And he says, not only for you, but for those who will believe because of your testimony. For all of us, he says, this is true, that they may all be one. And listen to this. *Just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us.* Let me say that again. Jesus says, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us. Jesus says, Father, you are in me, and I am in you, and now, by the Spirit, I am in them, so that they may be in you and become perfectly one with us. The Trinity. Was that confusing enough? It takes a long time to just wrestle this to the ground. And let's be honest, right? That sounds like some sort of wild New Age Eastern woo-woo, right? What does that mean? What does that mean that Jesus is in the Father and that the Father is in Jesus and that Jesus is in us and now we get to be in the Father? What does that mean? Talk about God being on audio. I have no idea.

The word for it, because we have no other words to describe what it looks like for three and one to be our Trinitarian God and all those things is the word *perichoresis*. You can write that down. You can use that in a sentence this week. It's very impressive. *Perichoresis*. It means the divine dance. It describes the relationship between the Father, Son, and the Spirit for all eternity. They are in relationship with each other. And what Jesus is saying is, I have come and I have paid for your sin so that you can enter the dance. And the way that you enter the dance is that I must die and be resurrected and leave you the Spirit. And when I come and live inside of you, you get to come and join the dance. You get to experience the same exact kind of relationship that I have had with the Father and the Spirit for all eternity. You get to be a part of that.

That is not the way that we think about our faith. I guarantee you, and if you have settled for less than that, and so many of us have, it would be no wonder why a new car or an international vacation or a new romance or even just a good movie might actually bring us satisfaction. If you don't grasp that, the truly transcendent story over every single one of our life, it's no wonder why these things satisfy so easily. And if I could be so bold and you can take this as a word of a friend, that if that describes you today, then you are a person of which the Bible would say, shallow. There really is no depth, right? You're skimming across the surface of life, and you're running from event to event, circumstance to circumstance, person to person, just pursuing this fleeting feeling of happiness, when all the while God says, I have given you my Spirit that you might join the eternal dance of the Holy Trinity.

That's why we quote C.S. Lewis all the time. He says, "*it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak*". Too weak, friends. He says, you're a little child out looking out at an infinite ocean, you're stretched out before you, you're sitting on the edge of the shore with a pail and a shovel making mud pies. And it's no wonder why the world screams and you listen, why it's so much louder. Because in so many ways, if you haven't grasped that story, then the story that the world is telling you is all that you know. And it is so much more attractive until you find out the truth. You are searching for transcendence, you're searching for purpose and meaning and connection with the divine. You want more. And God says, it is right here. And David says, I have found it too, and it's where I'm running to. David says, yes.

But, here's the tricky thing for us. In order to find it, for most of us, we will never hunger from it until we finally start to fast from our toys in the shallow end of the pool. When we fear man more than God, we become fools. That's the biblical word for it. Believing the lie that happiness is right around the corner. Even though every experience tells us, every time, every time I buy something new, it eventually fades. Every vacation is never as good as I want it to be. Every new infatuation eventually lets us down. Every promise the world ever makes to us cannot live up to what it promised me. It's frustrating, isn't it?

And David even warns us here, I don't know if you heard it, right in the middle of all of this discussion, he says, *in your anger, don't sin*. It's going to be frustrating. It's very hard. People are going to let you down. People are not going to meet your expectations. People are not going to meet your needs. People will mock you. People will shame you. They will lie about you. Whether they think you're a fool for giving your life away, instead of trying to get out of this world, every

last drop of purpose and meaning and happiness it will offer you. And in that struggle, then, friends, for every single one of us, living between the devil and the deep blue sea, you only have two options.

You only have two options.

You can cut the rope and drown, or you can look up and press deeper into the one who has actually been holding the rope all along.

The God that David knew, the God who invites you today to trade the anxiety-ridden pursuit of the opinion of man for the unchanging adoption into the family of God, who poured out his very spirit into our hearts so that we might finally be able to cry, Abba, Father. Silence the siren songs of the world. Cry out instead to the God who hears. Let's pray.

Gracious Heavenly Father, that is the cry of our heart today. We have already confessed, again, even in our confession of sin, Lord, that we have feared man more than you, that in our lives it has been true, that you have been on audio and the world's been on video, Lord, that we have believed the lies. Father, we have come to you today and we have cried out like David, will you come rescue us? Will you come and meet me in our distress, Father? Father, will you give me a vision of what it means to move beyond mere doctrine to an actual living relationship with you? Father, would you give me the truest desires of our hearts that we are here today because we want that to be true for us, Father? And if we don't, would you give us the courage to even pray that, Father, would you give me the desire to desire you? Father, we love you. We pray that these words would not be forgotten in an hour, a day, a week, Lord, but they would be the very catalyst for us to dive deeper, Lord, to look up and see the one who is holding the rope, Father, and pursue you with abandonment, knowing all the while that you are first the one to pursue us, that you have caught us, Lord God, that you will not let us go. And in that security, Father, would you grow us up, help us love and fear and trust you more than anything else that we're being sold. We love you in Jesus' name. Amen