

Well, good morning, how are we? Good, good! I want to give a quick shout-out to those of you who are joining us in the online community! It is good to get to dive into the Word with you, wherever you are at the moment.

Well, if I haven't been able to meet you yet, my name is Doug; I'm one of the pastors here at Foothills. And this morning we're going to finish out our Psalms of Summer series by camping out in Psalm 143. So, if you have a Bible with you, go ahead and grab it, and if you would, open up with me to the book of Psalms, chapter 143, that's where we will begin.

It has been an encouragement for me, and I hope you too, to be able to spend the last couple of months working our way through some of the 150 different Psalms. In our short time, we have been able to see the variety of styles and voices within the Psalms. Some have been poems, hymns, or laments. Over the centuries church fathers and scholars have grouped and classified Psalms that share various content, themes, and structures.

Today's Psalm is one of only seven of its kind in the Psalms. It's known as a penitential psalm. That is, it's a Psalm of confession and humility before God. The Psalmist expresses sorrow over sin, or spiritual failures, and recognizes his need for God's favor and forgiveness.

This Psalm doesn't seem to fit into this group as much as some of the other penitential psalms do, but verse 2 is a strong and clear statement

about the unrighteousness of mankind. Which is why this Psalm has been traditionally included in the seven penitential psalms.

So, let's jump in at verse 1.

¹ Lord, hear my prayer,
listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness
come to my relief.

² Do not bring your servant into judgment,
for no one living is righteous before you."

If you have been around this summer for our series or spent some time reading about the life of David, you have probably noticed that David's life has been filled with crisis and struggle. And here, we find him again in some sort of crisis. We don't know exactly what is happening in David's life. This may be prior to becoming king when he was living as a fugitive running from King Saul. Or, maybe it was when his son, Absalom led a rebellion against him. We don't know, but we don't really need to. Because what we're getting from this psalm is really what matters here. And that is how David moves through his crisis.

I think it is fair to say that many of us, if not all of us, have gone through some sort of crisis in our lives. They may vary, with some experiencing health crisis, or relational crisis, or financial crisis, or career crisis, or identity crisis, I mean life is filled with so many complicated struggles that I don't believe any of us are immune to it. And the reality is that in those times of crisis it's not uncommon to be so surprised and that our responses to those struggles are not actually responses...but reactions. Reactions that, as we look back we may hope that we could have handled it differently.

And that is why I am so grateful for texts like this. Because our crisis is not a surprise to God.

Our **crisis** is **not a surprise** to God.

And in His goodness and faithfulness He has provided examples like David for you and I to glean from and learn from so that when the crisis does come, we are better prepared to respond and not just react.

And so we see David's heart posture as he begins in verse 1, "Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy..." Here we get to see two things about how David responds to his crisis. First, he calls on the Father, he says, "Lord, hear my prayer!" David knew that in this moment he must cry out to God and that God must hear him or he would be lost. For David there was no question about who is sovereign over all people and all circumstances. And so he made a real plea to a real God...who he trusted would hear, answer, and help him.

David's **humility** allowed him to **rely** on the Father.

Stressing the urgency of his cry for help, David used a typical Hebrew poetic method of parallelism here. He says the same thing again to emphasize his desperation, he says,

"Lord, hear my prayer...AND listen to my cry for mercy."

So the first thing David does when the going gets rough is he relies on the Father. He pleads before Him. But, this next thing, this next part is so important. There is a humility within David that we must take note of.

David cries out for "mercy."

Friends, stay with me, I really want us get this.

Mercy is **not getting** what we **do deserve**.

You only cry out for mercy when you know you deserve to be unheard, when you know you deserved to be punished. So, for David to cry out for mercy means that David had the humility to recognize that he didn't deserve to be rescued by God.

This is one of those moments in the Scriptures where I don't want to read too fast and miss the significance of what David is saying.

We tend to live our lives reliant on ourselves. We celebrate our accomplishments and our milestones. When difficulties arise, we get to work problem solving and coming up with solutions. Sometimes they work...or at least seem to for a time. And so it creates this false security in ourselves and our abilities. It really strengthens our sinful condition of pride.

Now, I want to be clear, that doesn't mean we don't do cool things. It doesn't mean that some quarterbacks aren't better than others. Some are better. For instance, Payton Manning is better than Tom Brady. But the difference here is that David recognizes that in comparison to God...he does not measure up because of how holy and righteous God is. The result being that he is aware he deserves punishment, he deserves separation from God. And so he cries out for mercy.

We see another example of a heart posture of humility when Jesus tells the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9. Here, the Pharisee prided himself on his accomplishments while the tax collector fell on his knees and simply cried, "have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus then declares, "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Again, in Jesus brings attention to this matter of an awareness of our relation to God when he starts his famous sermon saying, "Blessed are

the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3).” Jesus is not talking about an economic poverty. What he is saying is that a deep joy belongs to those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy and are aware that they have nothing of their own to offer God. They are blessed.

Deep joy belongs to those who **recognize their** spiritual **bankruptcy**.

Friends, this is a posture of humility. This is where David was at. “Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy...” I think a fair question that you and I need to ask ourselves, “is this where I am? Do I recognize my utter dependence on the Father?” Or am I trying to deal with the crisis or challenges of life on my own?

David continues his plea to God in the second half of verse 1 saying,

“in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.”

David knew something of the character and nature of God. He appealed to the faithfulness and righteousness of God. He asked God to act consistently within His character. David had a relationship with the Father that went deeper than a passing awareness. It was deeper than simply attending the sabbath celebrations, deeper than recognizing that God created him, there was an awareness of the character and nature of God that shaped his prayer life. This comes from repeated interaction and relationship building between David and the Father.

These speaks to the intentionality of David’s relationship with the Father. David didn’t wait until the crisis was upon him to start his prayer life. David didn’t wait till things got rough to start investing in his relationship with the Father. No, clearly David knew the Father. He trusted in the character of the Father, that He is faithful, that He is righteous and so he boldly made his request of God...out of his character.

And so again, I have to ask myself, I have to ask of us, is our relationship with God more than attending a weekly church service. Is it more than recognizing that God exists. Are we actively seeking to know God and intentionally pursuing Him in a way that we see and experience His character? This can only happen when we recognize our position in light of His reality. When through our experiences with Him we learn His character. Honestly, Some of us spend more time focused on our career progression than knowing God. Some of us are more concerned about sports standings or investment portfolios and what the stock market is doing than pursuing a relationship with the Father that isn't merely surface level.

We need to invest significant time and energy into our relationship with the Father. For some of you, this may be humbling, like the tax-collector just falling to your knees and saying, "have mercy on me!" And beginning your journey of the deeper life. For some of you, you're stagnant and you have a relationship with the Father but you know it can be so much more. Invest in that relationship more than anything else you invest in.

Regardless of how long we've been tracking with Jesus or whether we are at all, each one of us can commit to pursuing Him more than yesterday. For some that may mean you get involved on Foothills Academy. For others, maybe it means finally getting involved with our Young Marrieds, or Free birds, or any of our small groups. For some, maybe it's time to step into leadership of a ministry. All of these things will only help you live the deeper life.

David, again brings awareness back to the reality of his failings by pleading with the Father in verse 2,

"Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you."

David recognizes that yes, he deserves judgement, but he asks the Lord not to bring judgement on Him and that really, there is no-one who is innocent before the Lord. There is no one who stand righteous before the Lord. So he says, "please don't enter into judgement with me because I know that I'm not going to be found innocent and really no-one is.

And then David gives us a glimpse into what is happening in his life in verses 3 and 4. He says,"

³The enemy pursues me,
he crushes me to the ground;
he makes me dwell in the darkness
like those long dead.

⁴So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.

David knew the suffering of many different kinds. Here he's talking about an inward attack. He's talking about an overwhelming emotional pain. He says the "enemy pursues me." Here some of your translations may more properly say, "the enemy has pursued my soul (esv)."

What has the enemy pursued? His soul. He has crushed his life. David's spirit faints and his heart is dismayed. It's an overwhelming emotional crisis. And look at what David does in that time, let's look at verse 5,

⁵I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works
and consider what your hands have done.

⁶I spread out my hands to you;
I thirst for you like a parched land.

David says he remembers the days of long ago. I love this. David is reflecting back on the faithfulness of God and the hand of God to deliver and sustain him. He says, I remember days that you sustained me, cared for me, delivered me, I remember your works, your faithfulness toward me! He says I am considering, I'm thinking about what your hands have done!

Oh this is so important friends! Because remembering the faithfulness, remembering what God has already done builds faith! And when things are hard and you are in crisis, you need your faith built up! And so David remembers...and that's the key...David remembers which means there have been times where God has been merciful to David. When God has heard David. Experienced the goodness, the faithfulness, the kindness of God which allows him in this moment to remember!

This is why we can't wait! We need to invest in this relationship now! We can't wait! Something I have noticed over the years is that when things become difficult. When we enter a crisis, or when we are struggling with our faith it is common for people to pull away, to separate themselves from the church. They're so upset, or feel like their faith is being attacked, or angry, or they're discouraged, or depressed, and they just say, "I don't feel like going to church."

But that's exactly where they need to be! They need to be encouraged, they need their faith built up, they need to hear the Word of God, they need to be worshiping in the body of Christ! They need people to come alongside them so they can say, I'm a wreck, I need my faith built up, I'm at the end, the enemy is pursuing my soul!

But, so many people back away. They spend less time in the Word, they spend less time in prayer, they spend less time at church. And that just makes the problem worse. We're low on faith anyway. Now we're not getting refilled and we're a prime target for the enemy.

So David says, "I remember!" He forces himself in this crisis to meditate, to remember what God has done in the past. Look what he says in verse 6,

I spread out my hands to you; I thirst for you like a parched land.

David is admitting I need to be filled up and refreshed! He says,

⁷ Answer me quickly, Lord;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me
or I will be like those who go down to the pit.

David is saying Lord, you're my last hope! I have no-one else to turn to beyond you. He goes on...

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life.

Notice how in the beginning he says the enemy pursues my soul, but now David is saying, I lift up my soul! The NIV here says, I entrust my life to you. But, again, the better translation is I lift up my soul. In the midst of the crisis David actively is lifting up his soul, he recognizes the enemies deceit and he is taking steps to be intimately connected to the Father and so he says, "HERE IS MY LIFE! I GIVE IT TO YOU! A complete and total surrender and dependance on the Father.

Friends, do you relate to David? Are you in a place where the enemy is just pursuing your soul? I urge you to humble yourself before God and cry out have mercy on me! I lift my soul to you!

I hope that is the exception and not the majority. What we hear from David this morning is that "poor planning prevents peak performance."

Do not wait for the crisis to come to your door before you have a solid and trusting relationship with the Father. Invest now, so that you can remember later.