

## Confidence in Anxious Times

### Psalm 4

\***Map:** Last week, **1,100 unique locations** streamed; an estimated **2,200 people** worshipping with us.

\*Greetings to **those brand new** with us. Greetings to **members/regulars**. And a special greeting to **18 locations** who streamed using our **ASL, Sign Language!** Welcome.

\*Although I **“hope to see you soon and talk face to face” (3 Jn.)**, this digital platform still enables us to stay connected and see God at work. One **NH woman wrote:**

*“The Holy Spirit is so alive in these online services...I have never been more thankful to be a part of this church and more hopeful for our future. God is truly shining out to show that our Church's strength is not in a building, but in the Holy Spirit joining us together spiritually. I believe God is bringing the revival we've prayed for!!! This is very exciting!”*

(Testimony; NH woman)

\*What a crazy time we live in! All this **“staying at home”** has made **days feel exceedingly long**.

\*Finally, we have entered April! One **Social Media post:** **“I survived the Great Depression; WW2; the Vietnam conflict; 9/11; and...March.”**

- If you feel like **you barely survived March...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you feel like **2020 has been one big April Fools' joke...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you feel like **life is out of your control...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you are **short on patience and big on worry...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you are **having trouble sleeping...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you face an **uncertain future...Psalm 4** is for you.
- If you **struggle to trust the Lord...Psalm 4** is for you.

\***Psalm 4 is known as the “Evening Psalm,”** written in anxious times by a man who struggles to sleep.

\*It **begins** in distress; David is **worried**, facing an uncertain future & asks God to help.

\*It **ends** in peace; David **lays down to sleep, at rest**, calm & confident b/c God has the future.

\*Song: *“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow...all fear is gone...I know, He holds the future.”*

\*Northern MI – Psalm 4 is a **Divine Stimulus** to meet **the needs of tomorrow**. It is a **chapter that meets us in our sleepless nights**. It introduces our worry to the one Person who safely holds the future.

#### 1. Bring your worry to the Lord, (v.1-3)

- **He has helped before.** (v.1)

*1 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!*

\*It's a prayer of distress. He has a **ton** of worry; A **pound** of distress; An **ounce** of panic.

His prayer is a **declaration of dependence of God...he is at a point of need.**

\*But like **yeast that makes bread rise**, his prayer **risers with a heaping of hope**:

*“You have given me relief when I was in distress.”*

\*IOW: His prayer of distress rises with this hope: **God is proven faithful in distress.**

\*My friend, **no matter what distress you face**, remember that God **does not “stay at home”**

\*He is not distant; He is not far off; His is faithful to help in time of need.

\*One **NH business owner** takes comfort knowing God is faithful. **In distress, his hope is in God:**

*“One of the emotions I am feeling is grief...I **am grieving** what was and what was to come because presently I am not living in either of those realities...How in the world do we reconcile the deep difficulties and frustrations we are experiencing right now with a God who loves us?...I have been **taking great comfort** in getting deeper in touch with my Creator and trying to really dig in seeking the answer to “**what are you up to God**”? I don’t know when we will see an answer. But in the meantime, I have been **reminded again and again** of how much He really does love me (all of us) and **how much comfort there is surrendering my anxiety, fear and control** to Him knowing that He has this. **This did not surprise God!**”*

\*My friend, are you able to **surrender worry to God**, knowing that He will give relief?

\*Are you able to **take comfort**, knowing that **2020 did not come as a surprise to God**?

\*No matter what we have **lost**, or what has been **cancelled**, or what is beyond our control, our comfort is knowing that our **relief will come from the Lord.**

- **He will help again. (v.2-3)**

*2 O men, **how long** shall my honor be turned into shame? **How long** will you love vain words and seek after lies?*

\*David looks around at his crazy times, and he wonders aloud: “**How long will this go on?**”

\*IOW: **How long** will things feel upside down? **How long** til things go back to normal?

\*Frankly, this is at the heart of what we all want to know.

\*How long will America be on a **national pause**?

\*How long will we have to endure **closures and cancellations**?

\*How long until **churches gather? Until weddings celebrate? Until funerals grieve?**

\*How long will we have to **stay at home**?

\*One **Facebook friend posted this week:**

*“Free, to a good home. Three teenagers. One drives. 2 of 3 cook, one quite well. The other might burn the house down. All three can eye-roll like you wouldn’t believe, all know how to properly slam their door, all are fluent in “I’m bored,” and they can argue over ANYTHING. Please text if interested. Free delivery.*

\*Seriously though, we do wonder: **“How long will we be sitting at a Red Light?”**

\*Short answer: We have no idea...but we better prepare for a **PROLONGED** season.

**\*Victor Frankl writes about enduring time in the Holocaust (“Man’s Search for Meaning”)**

*“Forces beyond your control can take away everything you possess except one thing, your freedom to choose how you will respond to the situation.”*

**\*One State Governor** told his citizens to **“calibrate yourself and your expectations”** because if we keep thinking we will return to normal soon we will be disappointed.

\*This is what David does. After he asks, **“How Long?”** he **calibrates his mind** to truth:

*3 But know that **the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.***

\*Know this: **However prolonged a season we face**, know the Lord is with his people.

\*However long **we are stuck at home**, know that God is stuck there with you.

\*However long we are **on a national pause**, know that God’s promises are not paused.

\*However long **we are socially isolated**, know that the Lord hears when you call.

\*Let me encourage you to **calibrate your mind**. **Surrender control** of your life, your calendar, and your days to the Lord who will never leave you or forsake you.

## 2. ...and reflect on what matters, (v.4-5)

\*What are we to do during a **cultural holding pattern**?

\*What do we do when we **can’t go anywhere...can’t do anything...can’t see anybody...**and all we want to do is **“get out of the holding pattern...and return to normal?”**

\*Well, one thing we all have is **time...to get alone with God and give serious consideration to life.**

### ● **Personal Issues** (v.4)

*4 Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*

\*It is fascinating that whatever distress David is facing, it is having huge impact on relationships.

\*IOW: Whatever is causing distress in relationships, here is a **life principle**:

**“Don’t react. Go to your room. Sit on your bed. Be quiet. And ponder life with God.”**

\*IOW, ask God: **How should I respond? What does my heart need?”**

**\*My heart:** *Why am I upset? How should I respond? What does forgiveness look like?*

**\*My family:** *What do my children need? How can I bless my spouse? What changes should I make in my response?*

**\*My Calendar:** *Where do I need more margin? What is really important to me?*

\***One NH man** is taking this time in culture to give serious consideration:

*“Man, I’m loving this time. The calendar is clear. I have no obligations. When this is all over I’m going to really contemplate what I’m going to recommit myself too.”*

\*Have you ever considered that **this national RED LIGHT** is a perfect opportunity to **SLOW DOWN** and **HIT THE RESET** button on what really matters in life?

*\*What a practical lesson: “Go to your room. Get alone with God. Bring your heart to the Lord and think **BIG** about personal changes.”*

• **Ultimate Issues (v.5)**

*5 Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.*

\*Now for **even bigger stuff**. What does God want from you? What can you give him?

*\*Is there an area of life you need to surrender to him...or trust Him with?*

\*Maybe **you need to trust the Lord with future provision, like one man who wrote:**

*“Just listened to your message on Psalm 46 [God is our refuge]. I must confess to having to deal with many of the fears you’ve discussed, with fear of my shrinking retirement account at the top of that list. Your message has given me a new focus as I look at the current state of affairs in a new light...the light of belonging to a Sovereign God who is truly in charge.”*

\*Think about it: *Where do you need to “put your trust in the Lord?”*

*\*How can you live by faith in the risen Lord? What sacrifice could you make to Him?*

*\*Friends, the present crisis gives us a perfect opportunity to showcase the love of Jesus?*

**\*One NH couple wrote: “Divine Stimulus Package”**

*“Although I have had great anxiety over the years of being able to provide for my family, it was my growing relationship with Jesus that allowed me to see **He has, and will always provide**. I am so thankful for New Hope...Now “if” I was receiving a check from the government, I would not feel right in keeping it and thus would have donated it to people that had greater need than ours...Then I watched Sunday and heard about having to tap into New Hope Emergency Funds to equip the Benevolent Fund to help your families. ‘Emergency’ is the word that settled on my heart...Now I feel called to send what I would have received from the government had we actually qualified. I want to **help you help others**, even if in a small way...Thank you for reminding me of God’s promise and allowing my family to help your Church in a small way.”*

**\*My friend, in the distress of our day, take time this week to get alone and consider:**

*\*What changes does God want me to make? Where do I need to trust Him? Who should I forgive? Where is God at work? How can I serve others? Where do I need to change?*

3. **...then go to sleep. (v.6-8)**

*6 There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!”*

\*IOW, many in David's day had **anxious hearts** looking and longing for good news.

**\*Every day, this is what Americans wonder:** "When will good news ever come again?"

\*This is the **turning point** for David. Even with **external distress**, he discovers **internal peace**.

v.7 "You have put more **joy in my heart** than they have when their grain and wine abound."

**\*IOW: "Christ in our heart is better than corn in the barn." (Spurgeon)**

"Christ in our heart is better than **money in the bank.**"

"Christ in our heart is better than **dinner in the restaurant.**"

**\*Is that true of you?** Have you "learned the secret of being content in every and any circumstance?"

**\*Have you invited Christ to enter your heart, fill your home, and make you content?**

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

\*One Pastor: "**There is no pillow so soft as a promise.**" (Spurgeon)

\*He began **sleepless and worried**. Now he sleeps fully confident that he is secure with God.

\*What a great verse for those who **lie awake at night worried and afraid.**

\*What a great verse for those are **anxious about the future.**

**\*One New Hope woman wrote a testimony: "Letting God take the reins"**

*"This is the first time in my life that I'm allowing God to take the reins. My whole life I have been a woman that plans everything. I feel uncertain without a plan...Through this entire rough journey, I have felt one unifying message: **God has a plan for my life.** I am so incredibly sure of it. My faith has never been stronger than it is in this troubling time. So, I'm doing something I've never done before. Instead of finding my next steps on my own (which has, let's be real, never worked that well in the past), **I'm asking God for discernment...I'm committing all of the decisions over my future to God...I'm waiting on God** to show me the plan for my life...It's time for Jesus to take the wheel and me to get out of the way: Let Go, Let God.*

***It. Is. So. Scary. To. Not. Have. A. Plan.** I am not good at letting go! I want to control everything, all the time!...Please pray that I may be comfortable in the discomfort of waiting because I know His plan is worth it."*

\*What about you? Have you surrendered control of future plans to the Lord? Do you **trust Him?**

\*Is worry/fear causing **sleepless nights...or are you peacefully at rest knowing God has your future?**

*"Because He lives, I can face tomorrow...All fear is gone...Because I know, He holds the future."*

### **Action Steps:**

This week, a Christian counselor from N.H. compiled a practical list of:

***“Tips for Turning Stress and Anxiety into Peace”***

- Be gracious with yourself and others.
- Structure your day; keep routines.
- Limit the amount (and kind) of news/media you consume.
- Help someone else.
- Pray to the God who loves you.
- Make a list of what you can control and can't control.
- Stay connected with others!
- Take one day at a time.
- Listen to praise music.
- Remember: we have eternal life in Jesus.