



Valley Life Community Church

Pastor Vinnie Hanke

Psalms 2023: Jesus' Songbook

June 4, 2023

Psalm 11

If you have your Bible, would you please turn to Psalm 11, and I'll remind you some big things, or some big values, about the book of Psalms, and why we're spending our summer working our way through the odd sections of it.

1. **We believe that the Psalms are worship songs.** These model praise and devotion to God, and they flow out of the hearts of people who want to know the living God in the midst of all of life's circumstances.
2. **We believe that God reveals himself in the Psalms.** That pen to parchment of the Psalms was put to place for people's understanding of God. Ultimately, they are God's revelation of himself. He reveals his character, his steadfast faithful love, his righteous judgment, and his glorious creativity through the Psalms.



3. **We believe the Psalms remain evangelical and gospel centered.** Christ is at the core of the Psalms. He told his disciples and taught his disciples that he could be found there. So as we work our way through them this summer, we will find Jesus here.

4. **We believe the Psalms are full of hope.** I don't know if you've fallen in the trap of doom scrolling, but I know I need some hope. The Psalms are a place that we can turn when life and the world around us seems out of control and chaotic.

5. **We believe the Psalms help build community.** They're a reflection of the community of God's people who would come together and sing and read and study them. In the book of Colossians, which we've been studying in the adult Bible study, we're told in chapter 3 that we are to admonish and encourage one another with the word of Christ using the Psalms. So they help build community as a church as we commit ourselves to the study of them each and every summer.

For now, if you have your Bible, or your app scrolled to Psalm 11, I'm going to invite you to stand with me for the reading of the Word. We stand as a church for the reading of God's Word out of reverence for the place that it holds in our lives. It is the thing that holds the authority in the church. Not me, not

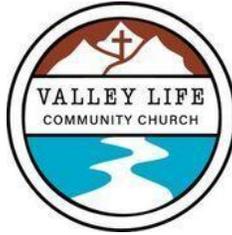


us, not even this building, but it is the Word of God that is the authority in all manners of our life, faith, and practice. So we stand when we read it together as a symbol of that commitment and devotion to it. With a clear mind, with a ready heart, and a willing spirit would you hear the Word of the Lord beginning in Psalm 11, verse 1:

***I have taken refuge in the LORD.
How can you say to me,
“Escape to the mountains like a bird!
For look, the wicked string bows;
they put their arrows on bowstrings
to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.
When the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?”***

***The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD—his throne is in heaven.
His eyes watch; his gaze examines everyone.
The LORD examines the righteous, but he hates the wicked
and those who love violence.
Let him rain burning coals and sulfur on the wicked;
let a scorching wind be the portion in their cup.
For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds.
The upright will see his face.***

This is the Word of the Lord, church. Amen? Let me pray for us.



God, thank you for this word this morning. Thank you that in the midst of chaos and what can feel like a world out of control, you bring encouragement, you bring hope, and you bring a bright future. I pray that you would help me to bring those things to your people to remind us of that great truth. That you hold the world in your hands. That you are the sovereign and good King in control and that a beautiful vision of the future awaits us. Help us now, we pray. Remove the distractions that would steal away our thoughts or try to tempt the cares of our heart. Make right the work of our hands, we pray today. For your glory and our good through Christ, amen.

You may be seated. What do you do and where do you turn when the world around you feels like it's gone insane, when it feels like the very moral fabric that shaped your life is being torn apart before your very eyes, when the places you would go for peace and security no longer provide that, when the laws are not upheld, when morality is undermined and it seems like everywhere you turn evil sweeps on unchecked and unrestrained, when it seems like the Bible is undermined and its teachings are just disregarded as some old fable, or folklore?

What do we do when all of this goes on around us? Psalm 11 provides the key answers to these questions. When the foundation of our morality, when the foundation of our world, when it feels like objective reality itself is being dismissed, where do we go and where do we turn? Psalm 11 is going to answer that question for us.



If you like to outline the psalm as I work my way through it, here's a brief structure to it. In verses 1 to 3 it describes the temptation that David faced. That is the problem, the struggle, the issue that has prompted his writing. So that's verses 1 to 3. In verses 4 to 6 we have his reaction to it. How did he respond to this temptation or this issue or these circumstances? Then in verse 7, we have the result.

If your taking notes today for community group (I hope that you are) here's my main idea: **When the world goes crazy disciples take refuge in the ever-close and in-control King Jesus.** When the world goes crazy disciples take refuge in the ever-close and in-control King Jesus. Let's begin with Psalm 11, verse 1. The headline might be there, ***"Refuge in the Lord,"*** if you're in the CSB, and then we get the note, as is often found within the first 50 psalms, regarding the circumstance or the way in which the psalm is to be sung among the people. This simply says, ***"For the choir director. Of David,"*** which means this was a worship song. This was a psalm to be sung among the people and it comes from David as a majority of the psalms within the first 45 are attributed to.

We begin with verse 1. ***"I have taken refuge in the LORD. How can you say to me, 'Escape to the mountains like a bird! For look, the wicked string bows; they put their arrows on bowstrings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.'"*** David is describing a circumstance in and around his life in



which the wicked around him have taken aim from the darkness at the righteous, or at the upright in heart.

They have assaulted and began to onslaught those who would follow the ways of the Lord, and they have done so from what David describes as the shadows. That is, there is some kind of unseen opposition to who and how he's trying to live. The advice that he's given is to escape to the mountains like a bird. That's the end of verse 1.

Under this onslaught and attack from the wicked from the shadows, the advice that he is given from his friends, or from his advisors, or perhaps from even the wicked says, "You should escape to the mountains like a bird." That is, you should get out of here. You should just run away and find an escape. The trial or the circumstance is so great for you that the only way out of it is to find a way of escape.

But David's response is actually the opening line in verse 1. He says, "***I have taken refuge in the Lord.***" That is, he has chosen not to escape from these circumstances but rather to seek safety, comfort, and security...that's what that word *refuge* represents: safety, comfort, and security...in the Lord. So under this onslaught from the wicked in rejection of the advice of his friends, advisors, or even the wicked themselves to run and escape, David chooses to find his comfort, security, and safety in the Lord.

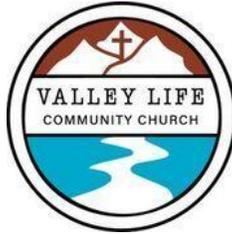


Then verse 3 gives us an interesting question. It says, ***“When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*** The word there for *foundations* means the basis of common life and social order.

The basis of common life and social order. So what is David saying here? The onslaught of the wicked, the attack upon the upright in heart, is like the foundation of the social order and morality of life being torn apart. That is, what unites and makes for the common life is being destroyed and torn apart.

For David's context this could be a time or season in which the law of God is not being followed among the people, in which those who would reject God's law from the Torah and live contrary to what God's word, will, and way says is beginning to tear apart the very fabric of the foundation of their common life together as the nation of Israel and the common social order. If I were to put this in our context today, I would maybe ask some of these questions. Consider how the answers to these questions have changed in the world in recent history.

If we think about the foundation of our common life and social order together, feeling like there's cracks in that foundation, consider these questions. If I asked you these 10, 15, 20 years ago compared to if I asked you these questions today, how might the answers change at least according to the world and culture?



So let me ask you this first one. Are the police good guys or bad guys? When I grew up, the police were the good guys. But if I asked you that today, it seems like the answer becomes way more complicated.

There are some who would not outright agree that the police are the good guys.

If I asked you what is a woman? Growing up, that was pretty simple, and I got a D in ninth-grade biology.

If I asked you who can get pregnant, that felt pretty straight forward most of my life. I've got three kids; I thought I had that figured out. Ten years ago, if I asked you what is marriage, we knew what that meant.

But if I asked you today, it seems as though, at least according to the culture and the world, that's been redefined.

Consider the words that have entered into our common conscience culturally together as a result of the gender revolution. Gender-fluid, non-binary. (That's my favorite one because the irony of it is the moment you say you are non-binary, you immediately set up a binary. I'm either non-binary or binary, which is in and of itself a binary.) Or this one: pregnant people. Consider all of these things that have entered into our collective conscience culturally and how they attempt to rip at the fabric, or the standard, of the foundation of objective reality.

That's what David's asking in verse 3. When the foundations are destroyed...that is, the thing we stand firm upon, the simple objective reality that binds our social and common life together... When that



begins to have cracks, and crumble underneath us, his question is, “...*what can the righteous do?*”

David's question communicates a sense of being powerless or perhaps even being hopeless, and maybe that's how you felt in response to what we've watched happen in and around the world around us.

Maybe you sense hopelessness? How can I compete with the sheer onslaught of the gender revolution? How can I establish a foundation of God's Word and Truth in the lives of my kids when they're onslaughted with what feels like an ulterior agenda, with wickedness from the shadows that has taken aim at the core of reality?

Some would say, “Well, you just have to fly away like a bird to the mountains for safety.” Some would say, “You just have to escape. You just have to divorce yourself from it.” But for David, the advice to just simply run away from the wickedness and from the foundations being destroyed is unthinkable. That's why he says in verse 1, “Why do you say to me, fly away like a little bird to the mountains for safety?”

Such flight is a failure of faith for David. It's a failure to take refuge in the Lord, to seek comfort, safety, and security in God when the foundations of objective reality seem to be crumbling. Instead of escaping from that, David finds his comfort and security in the Lord. He drives himself to faith, not to flight. To take refuge not in himself, or in a means of escape, but rather in the Lord.

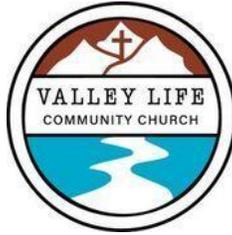


Now, before we all assume we are just like David and we would never say, “Yeah, I’m just going to run from a fight,” or the answer is to escape from the wickedness of the world... No, no, before we all just assume that we’re like David and not like his advisors, let me ask you to consider just for a minute how many have run recently to find refuge in a new place?

We talk about it all the time. When trying to get from one side of Meridian to the other on Saturday. How many have moved to Idaho to find refuge or abandoned a major city because the policies and practices have felt like it didn’t align with their worldview or their life anymore? Fill in the blank with your preferred state of choice.

How many are living their lives seeking to run away from something because it feels like the foundations are crumbling? How many churches or ministries have sought to create a Christian sanctuary to avoid contamination from the world? I mean, we have whole Christian sects whose identifying marker is this. Think about the Amish community or the Quakers who set up a defined community to escape a broken foundation.

Now, I’m not saying you can’t move to a new place, and I’m not saying you can’t improve your quality of life, and I’m not saying you can’t find a better place to raise your children or to work a better job. But



what I'm saying is that if we think a place is going to offer the safety and security we want in this life, we are sadly mistaken.

Only the Lord as our refuge is our true escape. Only the kingdom of heaven and the new creation will provide the sinless, free, uncorrupt, flourishing environment that our soul longs for. A.W. Tozer says, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."

What you think about God is the most important thing about you. What comes to mind when you think about God is what your soul will move toward in a time of chaos and crisis. So for many people they have sought refuge in something else other than God when they feel like the foundations of their life are falling apart.

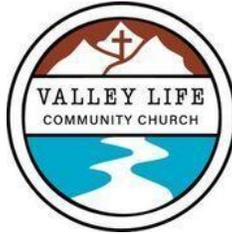
What we're going to do now here in Psalm 11 is we're going to find out the most important thing about David right now. We're going to find out what David's mental image of God is. We're going to find out what comes into David's mind when he thinks about God. We're going to find out where David's soul moves toward when he feels helpless, hopeless, and powerless.



Look at verse 4. ***“The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD—his throne is in heaven.”*** Verse 4 is David's mental image of God that his soul moves toward when he feels hopeless, helpless, and powerless. When he's confronted with a world in which the foundations are being destroyed, his mind doesn't move to escape as his advisors do. His mind moves to the heavenly throne room of God.

The phrase *holy temple* only occurs three other times in the Psalms: in chapter 5, chapter 79, and in chapter 138. In each case it is the earthly temple that is in view. What David has in mind here when he describes this vision of God is both the holy temple and the throne room of heaven. That is to say that God's earthly dwelling place in the Old Testament was the tabernacle or the temple, the place where he dwelt among God's people. Where it was supposed to be his *presence* was. Then David brings his mind up to heaven to the throne room.

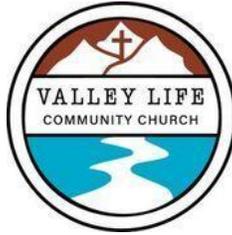
So what does David have as his mental image of God when he feels hopeless, helpless? He has in mind both the transcendent and immanent King. Those are big words. What do I mean? When I say transcendent, I mean the God who is above everything else. Who transcends all things that we know and love and care about. Who is self-contained in the person of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the godhood of God when we talk about the transcendence of God. The fact that he is God above and over and in control of everything. We could describe it in a phrase. When we talk about the transcendence of God what we mean is that God rules from heaven.



What about the immanence of God? What do we mean by that? We mean that God is ever close and personal and dwells with his people. We've talked about this in the Psalms, the way they use both names for God. When we read the word *Lord*, David is talking about the ever close and personally connected God. When he uses the word *God*, he's using God's name as the transcendent one, the over and above sovereign and supreme King.

What David has in mind here in verse 4, in his vision of God, is the God who is over and above everything and present among his people. When David looks to the Lord, who is in his holy temple, he is seeing God as the moral standard by which the thoughts, intentions, words, and actions of all people will be judged. When David speaks of God ruling from heaven upon his throne, he's looking to God to be the transcendent King who is enthroned in heaven and who will, at one point in time, judge all people in all places at all times.

So where does David turn when the world goes crazy? He turns to the Lord, who is ever close and personally connected to him and enthroned in heaven as the judge of all. When we think about the immanence and transcendence...that is, the ever close and supremeness of God...they are met in the person and work of Jesus Christ.



Jesus is the beautiful picture that God has given us of his transcendence and his immanence. It is Jesus who dwelt as God among us as well as being the King of Kings. Our faith in the person and work of Jesus is faith in an immanent and transcendent King. It's to that which we need to return, especially in times of moral decay, in which our life feels chaotic.

John 1:14 teaches us this about Jesus. It says, ***"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*** The beauty of what John says here is that the Son, who is face to face with the Father, has now come face to face with us. So that when we look at the Son's face we see the reflection of the beauty, glory, and marvelous nature of God's being.

John tells us that Jesus is the one who was full of grace and the embodiment of truth. What does that mean? It means Jesus was full of unmerited favor toward God's people. This is God being immanent. Drawing near to us is God's grace. The fact that we as sinners are drawn into God's presence is a beautiful picture of his grace. Jesus was full of that. So much so that he actually dwelt among sinful humanity. That was God being immanent among his people.



But Jesus was also what? He was also full of truth. This is God’s supremacy or his transcendence. Jesus was objective reality, is objective reality, and forever will be objective reality. He is true for all people in all places at all times. He dwelt among us. But he is also now ruling and reigning as the King of Kings.

Listen to how Revelation 19 describes him upon his return. It says, “**...he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**” Jesus is the embodiment, the final authority, the true King and Lord. His power is unmatched, and his authority is unrivaled. He is the full embodiment of what David has in mind in verse 4 when he says, “**The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD—his throne is in heaven.**”

So where does David find safety, comfort, and security when he feels like the world has gone crazy? In the Lord! Where do we find safety, security, comfort when the world around us feels like it’s gone mad? In Jesus Christ.

The rest of verse 4 says, “**His eyes watch; his gaze examines everyone.**” What does the Lord do from his throne? He sees. He sees it all. The word there for *eyes* is *eyelids*. Remember the old phrase, keep your eyes peeled, which sounds really weird when you say it out loud? And gross. But it’s as if the Lord’s eyes are peeled. That is, his eyelids are continually open, watching forever now and always.



Go back to verse 2. Let me ask you a question about it. Where are the wicked in verse 2? Kids, this is where you can fully participate. Look at verse 2. They're stringing their bows. Where are they located while they do that? In the shadows. Now, I don't see very well in the dark. I have to have a flashlight, especially since I've gotten a lit bit older. It's no good. More stubbed toes than I care to share.

But you know who can see in the dark? This one's easy. God can. God can see in the dark! Which means even as the wicked conspire together in the secret unknown places to the righteous, God knows and sees. Even as David just feels the effect of just having their arrows pointed at him and doesn't know where they are or where they're coming from, the Lord knows because he sees, he watches.

The word *examines* here is the word that comes out of metallurgy for smelting. Are you familiar with metallurgy or the smelting process? Here it is. It's a process by which ore from the earth is mined, placed in a fire, and heated to expose the precious metal contained within. The ore will begin to liquify, creating slag or dross, which would then be removed and wiped away, preserving that which is precious and removing that which covered the metal.

David says that the Lord watches and his gaze examines everyone. What does that mean? It means under the Lord's gaze everything that is false and impure melts away. The Lord is using the day-to-day



circumstances of our lives to draw out the impurity of the old nature in order to expose the beautiful inward character of Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit.

God is not wasting a single moment in your life. He is using every single thing, every single circumstance to examine you. That is, to melt away the impurity and the old way of life that exists apart from Christ to reveal the beautiful character and conduct of Jesus that is gifted to you by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5: ***“The LORD examines the righteous...”*** It’s the same word used from verse 4 to verse 5. ***“The LORD examines the righteous, but he hates the wicked and those who love violence.”*** The difference between the wicked and the violent will be their ability to withstand the examination of the Lord. Those who remain in Christ standing before God, under his judgment and watchful gaze will remain. Those who are outside of Christ will not. We can trust that justice and righteousness will prevail, even when the world goes crazy. Why? Because the Lord watches everyone. He sees it all. He examines the wicked and hates their violence.

This results in David's request in verse 6, that the wicked would receive punishment and judgment.

Verse 6: ***“Let him rain burning coals and sulfur on the wicked; let a scorching wind be the portion in their cup.”*** The wicked will not endure the furnace of God’s discerning fire, so they will experience the blazing coals, the burning sulfur. These are all images from the New Testament and the Old Testament



when they describe God’s judgment. Fire burning away the impure. They will receive the scorching winds in their judgment. There is a cup of mercy that David describes that overflows, but there is also a cup of judgment that God pours out upon the wicked.

It is to this that David draws his soul toward when he feels hopeless and helpless, when the headlines of his day frighten him. He remembers who sits on the throne. He takes his mind and his soul and allows them to drift into the throne room of heaven and envisions a time when the wicked, who feel like they get away with everything now, will one day have to answer for all eternity, and thus he finds peace.

In the outline I told you that verses 1 to 3 are David's circumstances or his temptation. In verses 4 to 6 are his response, carrying his mind to the throne room of heaven and seeing the results of that. Verse 7 is the ultimate result of David practicing this conviction of turning to the Lord in refuge.

Verse 7: ***“For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds.”*** The closing lines are a callback to the opening verse. They call the reader of the psalm not to fly away to the mountain seeking safety and security, but...what? To do what? To fight. To fight for righteousness. It’s as if David is asking the question again, ***“...what can the righteous do?”***



They can go on being righteous. They can stand against the evil of their time, and the one thing they must not do is fly away in escape. When immorality seems to rule and reign David calls his readers to remain righteous because the Lord is righteous, and he loves righteous deeds. Just and right action become our response to a world where there seems to be no justice and no righteousness.

The practical application of this is to embody that which we see missing and misshapen in the world. To become that which is missing in the world around us. To be kindness in a world that is unkind. To be people whose main attribute is that of love in a world that is so full of hate. To be people of mercy in a world that loves to assign guilt and blame. To be people of compassion in a world that becomes so apathetic to the wounds of others. To be people of peace in chaotic times. To be people who are united together by something in a culture and world that is so divided and polarized. To be a shining light to the dark and dying world is David's call.

What is our prize for staying in the fight when, honestly, escape seems easier? What's the big thing that we can anticipate? What's our victory prize if we stay and we chose righteousness because the Lord is righteous? That's the end of verse 7. Look at it. ***"The upright will see his face."***

In this small, simple phrase David gives us a summary of the good news. It's that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we receive reconciliation with God, and we will experience a face-to-



face moment with the master Creator of the universe, with the King of Kings, with the Lord. We will get to see him.

The Psalmist describes something that theologians have referred to as the *beatific vision*. That is, it is the fulfillment of what Jesus' promise says in Matthew 5:8 when he says that we will see God. This is the essence of it. In Matthew, chapter 5, verse 8 from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, ***"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."*** Blessed are those who will continue in the righteousness of Christ for they will see God face to face.

Seeing the face of him whose throne is in heaven and yet is near to us provides the courage we need for righteous actions in a chaotic and crazy world. There can be no greater motivation than the promise that one day you will get to see God face to face, and he's going to make all the wrong things right. He's going to heal all the broken things.

The book of Revelation describes this way at the very end, at the throne room of Christ. We're told this in verses 3 and 4. ***"...there will no longer be any curse."*** That would be enough, wouldn't it? ***"The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads."*** Repurposed, reclaimed, and renamed in the person and work of



Jesus Christ. This is the beautiful gift we receive in Christ: the promise that one day we will be face to face with God.

There will be no barrier. No boundary. No need for a priest to move in between us. We will be in a fully restored relationship. We will get to enjoy the very thing that Adam and Eve gave up in the garden. Remember we're told they got to walk with God in the coolness of the day, and God in his gracious infinite mercy restores all of that back to us and more.