



Valley Life Community Church

Pastor Vinnie Hanke

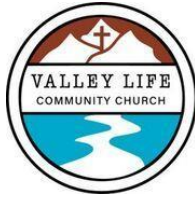
Psalms 2023: Jesus' Songbook

May 7, 2023

### Psalm 3

We're in the book of Psalms, this is something we began doing last year as a regular rhythm and that is once we get headed towards spring/summerish, we're going to be spending time in the Psalms. The name of the series this year is called, *Jesus' Songbook* and as we begin, I want to give you a little bit of background for it.

The Psalms are a unique book of scripture in that they are not composed in a single moment in history, but actually over a long period of time. Almost 900 years between the earliest Psalm, most likely written by Moses, Psalm 90, and the latest Psalms written by the exiles returning from Babylonian captivity such as Psalm 126 & Psalm 147. Psalms includes both the longest chapter in the Bible, and also the shortest, Psalm 119 and Psalm 117 respectively. It is the longest book in Scripture, and it might be described as an anthology, covering several hundred years and several different themes.



It is a collection of songs and worship themes. It is the Old Testament book most frequently quoted in the New Testament. Its authors include men like David, Solomon, Asaph, Moses, decedents of Kora, and even Solomon.

We organize the book in five sections: Book 1 is 1 – 41, book 2 is Psalm 42 through 72, book 3 is 73 through 89, book 4 is Psalm 90 through 106, and then book 5 is 107 through 150. The first book of the collection of Psalms is where we're going to spend most of our time this summer. Because it's an odd year, we're going to work our way through the odd Psalms. So we'll start with Psalm 3 today, you guess Psalm 5 next week, then if your good at elementary math you know that in three weeks, we'll be in...

A good number of the Psalms, including today's, include either a historical or musical heading. These give the situation and the Psalm context. We might understand where the Psalmist found himself, or what he was thinking about as he wrote out what the Spirit inspired him to do. Sometimes the musical notes will be instructions on how the Psalm was to be played, what tune to use, or what meter to use.

The Psalms can teach us a couple of things. Number one, they can teach us to be occupied with God in the midst of all circumstances and human emotion. The Psalms magnify and exalt God as our creator and Lord and ruler of the universe. They can also teach us, as the Psalm does today, to have faith in God in the midst of our trials, that we might receive comfort from him because they express God as near those who are brokenhearted and in the midst of trial.



John Stott commenting on the Psalm as a whole says this, “The reason why Christian people are drawn to the Psalms is that they speak the universal language of the human soul. Whatever our spiritual mood may be, (including this morning whether everything is awesome, or everything is not awesome) there is to be a Psalm which reflects it: whether triumph or defeat, excitement or depression, joy or sorrow, praise or penitence, wonder or anger.” There is a Psalm for you whatever you are experiencing in your soul and emotional life right now.

Five major themes of the Psalms:

1. **The Psalms are worship songs.** We need to keep that in the forefront of our minds. That’s why I titled the series, *Jesus’ Songbook*. Because Jesus grew up singing and worshiping. It would have been the Psalms that he sung. They model praise and devotion as they flow from the hearts of God’s people.
2. **God himself is revealed in the Psalms.** As God reveals himself, he reveals us. As we become more acquainted with God, we become more acquainted with ourselves. The full range of emotions and how God interacts with us in those experiences is on display in these living prayers.



3. **The Psalms are Evangelical, and Gospel centered.** In the Psalms we find the gift of God's grace shining brightly just as we do in the book of Romans. The Psalms have a prophetic dimension in which they point forward to the coming Messiah king, and they knit into the fabric of the New Testament over, and over, and over again.
  
4. **The Psalms are full of hope.** Even in the darkest and deepest moments that the Psalmist will experience, they almost will always end in praise and in hope. They never leave us in our broken and bloody world.
  
5. **The Psalms help build community.** The Psalms are a reflection of the community of God's people worshiping the Lord, witnessing to his might works, and as they bind us together, we can allow them to create not just devotional literature for us personally, but also the mighty Word of God in which we find a formation, a shared experience together as we read them and understand more of who God is and more of who ourselves are.

Alright, if you've got your Bibles, Psalm 3. I'm going to invite you to stand with me for the reading of the Word. This is something we do each and every week. It's a symbol of our devotion to the authority of Scripture in our lives. It's not we who stand over the Bible as the authority above it, deciding what it says or what it means. But rather, it is the authority that stands over us. As we stand in submission to it and



in honor of it with a clear mind and a willing heart and a ready spirit would you hear the Word of the Lord, beginning in Psalm 3.

***A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.***

***LORD, how my foes increase!  
There are many who attack me.***

***Many say about me,  
"There is no help for him in God."  
Selah***

***But you, LORD, are a shield around me,  
my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.  
I cry aloud to the LORD,  
and he answers me from his holy mountain.  
Selah***

***I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again because the LORD sustains me.  
I will not be afraid of thousands of people  
who have taken their stand against me on every side.***

***Rise up, LORD!  
Save me, my God!  
You strike all my enemies on the cheek;  
you break the teeth of the wicked.  
Salvation belongs to the LORD;  
may your blessing be on your people.  
Selah***

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

God, thank you for this time with your people. I thank you that your Word is a light that reveals all, and so I pray that you will do that today. That you will reveal all. All of the truth that we need. All of the hope

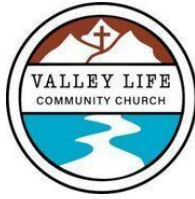


that we have. All of the grace and Gospel good news that is to be found in you. Would you illuminate our minds? Would you illuminate our hearts, God? Then ultimately, would you transform our lives so they might illuminate the truth of the Gospel to those who need to hear it and see it? We ask that you receive all of the glory from today. We keep none of it for ourselves, and we ask this, in Christ. Amen.

Here is my main idea for community group discussion: **The one who is both almighty God of the universe and the ever-so-close and personal Lord will sustain and shield his people in times of trial.**

The one who is both almighty God of the universe and the ever-so-close and personal Lord will sustain and shield his people in times of trial. Let's begin, Psalm 3. The headline in the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) might say, *Confidence in Troubled Times* in your Bible, and then we get this historical note: A psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom. If you like cross-references this is 2 Samuel, chapter 15. In verses 13 through 17 we learn about Absalom and his conspiracy against his father.

Absalom, what you need to know about him is that he was a handsome young prince in David's court. He was noted, in fact identified for his long, luscious, full hair. (I don't like him already. Thank you) And for a period of time, he put on an impressive public relations campaign and did that to undermine confidence in his father, David. This is 2 Samuel 15:1-6.



Eventually this public relations campaign would lead to a time where he plotted a rebellion against his father the king. He gathered his supporters in Hebron, where David was anointed as king, and his supporters gathered from all over the nation. After David's most trusted and wisest counselors joined the rebellion, Absalom announced his own kingship. By the time the news of the conspiracy had gotten to David, he was unable to do anything to stop it. His only recourse was to flee the kingdom.

This is what we read in 2 Samuel 15:13 and 14:

***Then an informer came to David and reported, "The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom." David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, "Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will overtake us quickly, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."***

The importance of this historical note is that it gives us a clue as to what kind of Psalm we're about to read. I mentioned that these notes touch on a variety of human experiences and emotions. This particular Psalm is what's known as a lament. If we're truly honest, we need lament Psalms. We need God's Word to speak to us when our life has not gone as we thought it would.

Because, if we're really, really, honest life is not all a collection of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok worthy moments. We're not always living our best life now. Not every day is Friday. In fact, some days



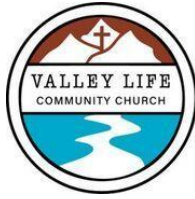
we'll experience what one author calls, "The disorientation of our lives." It's that moment we come face-to-face with the corruption and brokenness of the world, and it knocks us out of our perfectly planned and social media curated life. Have you ever been disoriented?

You thought your life was moving in one direction. Going one way. You had one plan. Then circumstances beyond your control knock you in a completely un-predetermined direction. These moments disorient us. They set us off on a new and unexpected and often difficult and challenging path. The Psalms of lament, or what Walter Brueggemann calls, "The songs of disorientation" are written for such moments in our life.

The lament Psalms are composed for the dark night of the soul. To find a modern-day equivalent, perhaps we could turn to the great artist Taylor Swift and every breakup song wrote ever. Or perhaps even this week, if you like popular music, Ed Sheeran released an album called *Subtract*. It's a journey of songs in which he laments the loss of his very best friend and finds out in the same month that his pregnant wife was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

So he writes lyrics and music that are an extension of his grief and lament. Because his life has been disoriented. He thought he was moving in one direction, and all of a sudden, he was moving in a completely new direction. One poignant lyric he writes is this, "Is this the ending of our youth when pain starts taking over?" Have you had that moment? Where it felt like pain was taking over your life?



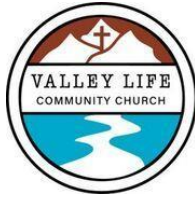


One major difference, however, between the songs of lament and people like Taylor Swift and even Ed Sheeran, is that they almost always, always, always, move from negative to positive. The pleading that takes place in these Psalms of lament always leads to praise. This is the movement of Psalm 3. In fact, it's the whole point that David's pleading moves from pleading with God to him praising God.

The situation, and vision, in Psalm 3 is that of a tormented David appealing to God as a divine warrior to fight for him. So let's begin, Psalm 3. We're going to break this up into several sections. Verses one and two are going to focus on the Psalmist's enemies.

Psalm 3:1-2: ***"LORD, how my foes increase! There are many who attack me."*** (This is written before social media by the way.) Verse two, ***"Many say about me, 'There is no help for him in God.'"*** One of the beautiful things about the Psalms is they are written as poems, as I mentioned they are songs. One of the things you begin to understand about Hebrew poetry when you study the book of Psalms is that the lines and the stanzas use a Hebrew poetic tool called parallelism. That is the first line will make a statement, and the line underneath it will modify or clarify or provide adjectives about it.

You can hear this in verse one when it says, ***"Lord, how my foes increase!"*** What's David saying? He's saying, "God I've got a lot of people who are presenting themselves as my enemies." Then the second line helps clarify why, or how, he knows that to be true. ***"There are many who attack me."*** The reason



knows, or the reason David is lamenting is because his foes are increasing, that is the many are beginning to attack them. In fact, Samuel will suggest in chapter 15 that its all the men of Israel, who have turned their hearts away from David and given them over to his son, Absalom.

Verse two, ***“Many say about me, ‘There is no help for him in God.’”*** What is the attack? What is the thing that David is suffering? What are the enemies doing that is the attack that is put upon him? It’s a verbal accusation. David's enemies are beginning to increase and they’re beginning to attack him with this verbal accusation. What is the accusation? Verse two tells us, it’s that God has abandoned him. That God has no longer placed his favor upon the king and that the king will find no favor in God. David has lost the covenant blessing and faithfulness of God.

Additionally, the second piece of this accusation is that God is unable to help, or rescue, David. Not only is David out of the grace of God, but also, even if he went to seek God for help, there’s nothing God can do about it. David isn’t the only one under attack from his enemies. God’s character and faithfulness is under attack. To speak of the fact that there’s no help for him in God. It doesn’t matter what David does, there’s no help that can be found because God is unable to help.

Then we read this word, *selah*. The word *selah* appears about 75 times in 40 different Psalms. It signifies a pause or an interlude. It’s probably a musical direction, or at least a moment to just pause and take a



breath. For us as readers then, we can use this word as a moment to slow down, to stop, and to ponder and reconsider what we have just read. What did we just read?

Well, including the historical context and the first two verses, we read that those who were once closest to the king, those in whom he had placed his confidence and trust, those of his own household, are now among those who make accusations that are the most bitter, that have abandoned him with betrayal, and who are attacking him with hate. No wonder David laments. No wonder he cries out.

Look at verse three. Begins with one of my favorite words in the entire Bible, *but*. Why? Because without that word we're just left with the first two verses. We're just left with David in opposition and under attack. No alternative. But David is going to do something. Listen to verse three, "***But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.***" David encourages himself in the midst of this onslaught and attack and abandonment. He encourages himself with three things about God. If you like lists, here they are:

1. The first thing David encourages, or reminds, himself of is this: **God is his shield.**

That God is his shield. Now again, this is meant to be poetic language, which means it uses imagery to present truth. So does David literally mean that God is a shield? No. He's using an image to invoke in our mind the character and presence of God in his life. The image of God as a shield is used at least 13 times



in the Psalms. It communicates this idea of protection. The shield was part of the defensive equipment that a warrior utilized in his armor.

This image of God as shield means that God is protecting David. That David would find protection in God. It also causes us to see the related image that God is a mighty warrior who's ready to protect and grant victory over the enemies of his people. This imagery will take on a greater clarity later in the Psalm.

A note about the shield, however. No matter how great or how large a shield that you have. The shield is not a preventative weapon. What do I mean? When David says that God is his shield, he does not mean that God will prevent him from being attacked. What does it mean though? It means that God will protect him through it. We need not be surprised when we are attacked as individuals, whether by sinfulness in this world, or our own fleshly desires of rebellion.

When we experience a disorienting event in our life, we can remove the surprise because God never promises us a trouble-free life. What he does assure us, and promises us, is his protection in the midst of a trouble filled life. The shield does not prevent attack, it only provides protection in the midst of us. If you have not experienced it yet, there will come a time in your life when you have nothing but God.



There will come a moment when it doesn't matter your power, doesn't matter your prestige, it doesn't matter the people around you, it will just be you and God. David is experiencing that moment and he finds in that moment that God is his shield, his protection.

2. The second thing that he reminds himself about is: **God is his glory.**

Verse three again, *"But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory..."* says David. Now the king of Israel was a pretty glorious position. David did it with some particular flair. He was a great warrior king. He conquered God's enemies. He established boundaries. He brought wealth, and power, and prevalence to the nation. He had done some things in his life to earn the respect and the gratitude and even the affection and glory of the people. It would appear now in his life and in this circumstance that all of that is gone. Absalom with his lies and false promises has stolen away all of that from David.

What is David experiencing? The fact that earthly glory, that worldly glory, will not last. If the shield implies protection, glory implies power. David has been driven away in shame, and humiliation, and weakness. His pride's broken. His reputation is slandered and yet, he can say here in Psalm 3:3 that God is his glory. How can he say that? Because he's beginning to recognize that his glory is not found in his health, in his wealth, or in his position, but that it alone comes from God.



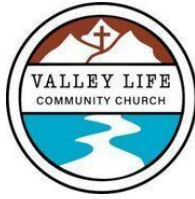
That ultimately what God thinks about David is what matters. That his standing, his power, his identity, his worth, his value, all is found in the faithful one. Part of the difficulty of our moments of disorientation, or our moments of lament, is that they will often rebuke the false identities we have. The moment our life is disoriented, we experience a path that knocks us off our planned, or preplanned, course. We're forced to wrestle with our own pride, and our own identity.

Maybe I'm not really who I thought I was. Maybe my life is not really going to go the way I thought it would. David is experiencing that moment, and rather than wallow in the shame that he experiences he chooses to find his glory, his strength, in God.

3. The final thing that David reminds himself and encourages his soul with is: **God is the one who lifts up his head.**

Look at verse three, ***"But you, LORD, are a shield around me, (number one, my protection) my glory, (that is my worth, my value, my power, my identity) and (the third thing) the one who lifts up my head.***

David left Jerusalem not only defeated, but dejected, despondent, and depressed. Samuel tells us that he walked up the Mount of Olives, and then he hung his head in shame. Yet, here in verse three, he tells us that God will lift up his head and restore his hope. Again, David is having



a reorientation moment. His life is being reorientated from the values of this world into the values of the kingdom of God. If he were to really look at his circumstances, yeah there's no reason to lift up his head. Staring at the ground moving forward. Left to himself David has nothing to be proud of.

But that's the whole point of verse three, isn't it? David is not left to himself. God is his shield. God is his glory. God is his protector. In the midst of this disorienting, lamentable moment, David is not left to himself. Go back to verse one. What's the first word of Psalm 3?

Ok, no hard questions, right there in your Bible, what's the first word of Psalm 3? *Lord!* Verse one of Psalm 3 is the word, *Lord*. It's an in choice of word. It's one of God's names used in the Old Testament. But it's not the traditional name that most of the Hebrew authors would use in terms of God. When they would speak of God, they would speak of God as the Almighty one. The master and ruler of all creation and the universe.

Now if you were in the midst of essentially a *Game of Thrones* plot where your throne is about to be overthrown. Wouldn't you want to appeal to the Almighty ruler of the universe? That's the God I need. I need the master God who is in control of everything. But that's not the word David uses here.



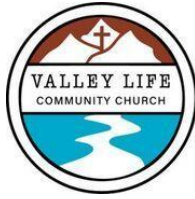
The word David uses here, that's written Lord in your Bible, is the personal affectionate name given by God to his people. When abandoned by his friends, betrayed by his son, forced out of his throne and kingdom, out essentially into the wilderness, who does David cry out to? The God who knows him. Who promises to be present with him. Who will never abandon him or forsake him.

That's the whole point of verse three. Is that in the midst of all those disorienting circumstances David is not left to himself. He is left to the one who knows him. The personal God who stands with him, and walks with him, and as we read in the catechism, knows every single hair on his head.

Let's pick up verse four. This next section, verses four through six focus on David's response to this great truth that he's been reminded of. That God is his shield. That God is his glory. That God will one day lift his head.

Verse four, ***"I cry aloud to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain."*** The verb here, cry aloud, is in the imperfect tense. It means that this is a repeated action. It means that David is continually crying out to God, and that God continually answers him. That David in the



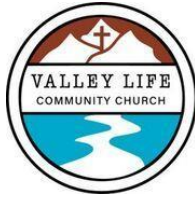


midst of this disorienting circumstance can pray, can cry out to God, and God is faithful to answer. He uses the personal name for God once more.

David is crying out to the one who knows him. He finds assurance in that God assures him that he's going to answer. David prays and God speaks. David prays and God moves. David prays and God comforts. And then we get this word, *Selah*, again. Once again, we're asked to pause and consider what did we just read. That David's shield, glory, and protector answer him.

Verse five, "***I lie down and sleep; I wake again because the LORD sustains me.***" Now remember David is surrounded by enemies. His throne is on the cusp of being stolen. His own flesh and blood is responsible for that betrayal. This is a test case for stress-induced insomnia. Or what my father-in-law likes to call the cement mixer in his head. When he just can't turn it off. It just goes "cha chug gah" all night. I like to call it the negative highlight reel on loop in my brain.

What does David do, how does he respond, after being assured of God's protection and shielding, and glory about him? He takes a nap! He sleeps. Why? Because again appealing once more to the Lord who knows, he sees that it is the Lord, the ever present, and ever so close, God who sustains him. That word *sustains* here in the CSB, it means unflinching support.



It means despite the circumstances David finds himself in, he is assured that God will provide unflinching support to him so he can sleep. Go back to verse three, what did David say God would do? ***“But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.”*** David trusts in the sovereignty and goodness of God that he could lift up his head even though he was experiencing a shameful condition and circumstance.

But David also trusts in God that at night he can now lay down his head. Because that same God is sovereign and good. So he can rest in peace. He can sleep easily, because he knows that when he puts head on the pillow it is the Lord who will sustain his life and bring him to the new morning. I wonder if we share the same conviction.

That each night when we put our heads on our own pillows that we are entrusting our bodies to the sovereignty and goodness of God. That if he is good and sovereign and puts breath in our lungs as the sun comes up, that it is he that has granted us another day. Do we understand and receive each day as a gift from God sustaining us. Do we really believe that it is God who is numbering our days? Do we really believe that?



We woke up this morning because God intended it to be so. That if we don't wake up tomorrow it's because God intended it to be so. If we believe that, wouldn't it dramatically impact the way we sleep? Wouldn't it dramatically decrease perhaps the number of sleepless nights in my experience? Certainly, it'd impact the way we live, which is the point of verse six. Look in your Bible.

***"I will not be afraid of thousands of people who have taken their stand against me on every side."*** Again, Samuel will tell us that all the hearts of the men of Israel have turned against David. Yet, David says, ***"I will not be afraid of thousands of people..."*** For those who have taken their stand opposite me and if I am even surrounded by them, I will not be afraid. Protected by God, David could face the new day without fear, in spite of being surrounded by thousands of enemies. Why?

Because the accusation from verse one and verse two is not true. There is help to be found in God. David has not fallen out of the providence and blessing of God. So he can stand face-to-face with his enemies, surrounded on every side without fear, why? Because he knows who's by his side.



Go back to verse three again. ***“But you, LORD, are a shield (where?) around me...”*** Where are the enemies? Surrounding him. David knows the Lord has his six, if you will. But David doesn’t have to worry about those who are behind him ready to stab in the back, or those in the front ready to stab him in the front.

Verse six says, ***“I will not be afraid of thousands of people who have taken their stand against me on every side.”*** Yet in verse three David was reassured that God is a shield around him. How can we have the courage to stand in confidence on the truth of Scripture? How can we have the courage to stand up for human life, every single one? How can we have the courage to stand for objective reality when it comes to gender, sexuality, and marriage?

When each and every day it seems as though we are in the minority. And there are thousands, if not millions, who stand in opposition to us. It’s because the Almighty God of the universe is our personal protector. He is our shield.

Verses seven and eight. These final verses focus on the Psalmist’s God. Verse seven, ***“Rise up, LORD! Save me, my God! You strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked.”*** This petition that David calls out harkens back to the days of Moses in Numbers chapter 10, verse 35. Every time the people would move, and the ark would begin to be raised



up and be carried with the people, Moses would do this, ***“Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: Arise, LORD! Let your enemies be scattered, and those who hate you flee from your presence.”***

David is invoking this imagery in Psalm 3:7. That is, “Rise up God!” be roused, get up and move on my behalf and on behalf of your people. Move against those who would rise up against you. It is interesting in verse one we have people rising up against the king, and then here in verse seven we have God rising up against the enemies. This is in contrast. For those who would rise up in rebellion, and then God who would rise up in response, and righteousness against that rebellion.

David cries out, ***“Save me, my God!”*** There’s that word for the Almighty powerful ruler of the universe; the divine warrior king, God. We see that imagery continue to play out when David prays, ***“...strike all my enemies on the cheek; [and] break the teeth of the wicked.”*** There’s an image for you.

This expression originated most likely in the Near-Eastern legal system. In context, one of the punishments for breaking the law, or breaking a breach of contract, or slandering, would be to use the tablet of the written law to smash your face and break your teeth out. Think of the old

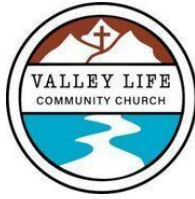


school eye for an eye penalty. Which means, if you verbally committed to something in covenant, and then you broke that verbal commitment, guess what you lose. Your teeth.

What are David's enemies doing to attack him in verses one and two? They are essentially slandering him and God. What does David ask God to do? To come and bring justice, on par with the offense. There are those who are speaking ill of me, God. There are those who are ill of you, would you come and smash their teeth out so they can no longer speak ill of us.

We close with the hope of verse eight. ***“Salvation belongs to the LORD; may your blessing be on your people.”*** And then there’s that word again, *Selah*. What have we just read? What are we to pause and consider? Nothing less than the salvation and sustainment in the midst of assault and attack on God’s people.

When we’re in the midst of disoriented circumstances salvation can be found in God. For David this would not be found in his wealth, his political influence, or even the might of his army. But in God alone would he find salvation. We can see this same truth in the Gospel of Christ. That salvation alone belongs to God, nothing else will satisfy the wrath and judgement of God, except the atoning work of Jesus Christ.



If we consider Psalm 3 in light of the Gospel, we can see that Christ experiences something very similar to David. As we consider Jesus' life in light of Psalm 3, let me point out a couple of parallels. In the garden, Jesus prays seeking God's help and a way out in the midst of a disorienting moment. A moment in which the weight of sin begins to bear down on him, so much so that he begins to sweat as droplets of blood. And he prays and seeks God's help and perhaps another way out. But nevertheless, trusting in the Father's will.

Like David, Jesus experienced betrayal from one of his own. Abandonment by most of his trusted friends, and even false accusations from his own people. Yet, while nailed to the Roman instrument of death, the Cross, Jesus cried out, ***"Into your hands I commend my spirit."*** At the moment of greatest suffering and pain, Jesus continued to trust the Father.

He endured suffering beyond our imagination and found strength to endure it in the conviction that his heavenly Father was both in complete control and was good. Even asking for the forgiveness of his executioners. It is this amazing truth that we celebrate and experience in the celebration of communion and the Lord's Supper.

[Communion Service]