

Seasons

Intro

- Welcome.
- Over the last few weeks we have been sharing what's on our hearts and what we feel God saying to us.
- Beth- unity.
- Pastor Steve- heaven to earth.
- This week I want to share about seasons.

Seasons

- I've really sensed God speaking to me recently about seasons and how life is made up of different seasons and timings.
- We have the natural seasons- spring, summer, autumn and winter... although in the UK it feels like it's always raining... and then I believe we have seasons where as a church or in our personal lives, things change, God speaks, we experience different things. Some seasons are amazing and some seasons are challenging.
- I remember when Josh and I got engaged and then married. It was such a sweet season. So much to rejoice in and be thankful for and still is today.
- I remember when I studied for my degree and I just loved that season- the friends I made, the opportunities I had, the things I learnt...
- But then we have seasons where things are uncertain, we move house and it's stressful, we change jobs and it's unsettling, we experience disappointment and hurts.
- I am sure many of us can relate to seasons where we experience great joy and contentment and then seasons where things feel uncertain and difficult.
- When we reflect on the last year as a church family, we see that God is doing something new. The season has maybe had ups and downs for you but we know that God has led and is leading us through it.
- We are starting to get new rhythms in place- gathering as a church family in September and entering into another season.
- I think September always feels quite significant- schools start, term starts, I remember when I was a child I used to love going to Clarks for my school shoes in the summer holidays and then getting a new pencil case for the start of the new season in September.
- I wonder what season you are in today and how are you feeling about it? Are you in a season of joy, of excitement, of uncertainty or challenge?

- Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.'
- I believe that God ordains seasons, both natural and spiritual, and that ultimately He is sovereign in all. His timing is trustworthy.
- Today I feel that God wants to remind us that it is possible to stand firm in every season we walk through if we look to Him and put our trust in Him.
- Just like I would prepare for a new school year with a new pencil case and school shoes, I think there are some things we can do to prepare us for each season of life.
- I want to share from the Psalms today. The Psalms are made up of cries of joy, lament, sadness and rejoicing; every season of life.
- There is a helpful pattern throughout many of the Psalms that can be described as orientation, disorientation and re-orientation.
- It's this idea that orientation is a place in which everything makes sense in our lives.
- Then disorientation is where things go wrong and we feel we have sunk into the pit.
- Finally, re-orientation is where we realise who God is and that He has lifted us out of the pit. We are in a new place full of gratitude and awareness about our lives and our God. (<https://stjamestheapostleregina.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/psalms-and-rhythm-of-life.pdf>)
- The Psalms are the lived experiences of people through different seasons of life and we are going to read from Psalm 62 this morning which is a Psalm from David.
- The context of this Psalm is that people were threatening his life and scheming how, not only to overthrow him as king, but also how to kill him.
- So in that season, this is what David writes:

Psalm 62:1-8

Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down—
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

Surely they intend to topple me
from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.
With their mouths they bless,
but in their hearts they curse.

Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.

1) **In every season... look to God.**

Firstly and very simply, we look to God.

- There is such life and hope that fills us when we look to God. In this Psalm, David says 'my soul finds rest in God. My hope comes from Him.'
- It is still true for us today.
- Recently, Josh and I have been in a tough season. One morning, when I was home alone, I took my guitar and my folder with my guitar chords and I just started to worship. And as I looked to God in worship, I felt such a strength fill me. My season hadn't changed in that hour, but my perspective had.
- Heidi Baker says, '*More is accomplished by spending time in God's presence than by doing anything else.*'
- We must look to God. If we try to walk through seasons in our own strength and understanding we will fall.
- For some of us today I feel that the key to finding that hope and rest in Jesus is by praising and worshipping Him.
- However, we don't just look to God when seasons are tough, but we look to Him when seasons are great too.

- I don't know whether you've ever found that when life is good, people have a tendency to forget God. They think they can do life by themselves and isn't this great.
- This is what the Israelites did in the Bible. They were prospering and doing well and so they forgot God. And then disaster struck so they started crying out to God again. It became a vicious cycle.
- We need to be Jesus People who look to God and acknowledge Him in every season. Not just when we need Him.
- I imagine what it would be like if I only went to my husband or my friends because I was upset and I needed some comfort. Then when life was great, I just ignored them! I can imagine they would feel a bit used.
- God loves us, has created us for relationship with Him through what Jesus did on the cross. And He calls us to look to Him and be with Him in every season.
- So, we prepare for each new season by looking to God.

2) In every season... God is our rock.

Secondly, we prepare for a new season by reminding ourselves that God is our rock.

Just like David cries out in this Psalm and begins to reorientate himself. He says, 'God is my rock and my salvation.'

I read the Bible and think on my experience of God and I picture Him as this immovable, unshakeable, all powerful, all loving God. He is on our side- the Bible tells us (Romans 8) that if God is for us then who can be against us?

Psalm 61:2 says, 'From the ends of the earth I call to you. I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.'

As I was preparing for today I was reminded of the story behind the song 'It is well with my soul.' I don't know if you're familiar with it (I won't sing it for your own benefit!) but it's an incredible example of someone going through a hugely tough season, yet looking to God as their rock. I want to read the story to you:

Story of It Is Well by Horatio Spafford- <https://www.thetabernaclechoir.org/articles/it-is-well-with-my-soul.html>

It Is Well with My Soul - Spoken Word by Lloyd Newell

(Life can be so unpredictable—joys and sorrows, beautiful blessings and distressing difficulties can come unexpectedly. Our life's dreams and plans

can change in an instant. We all know this to be true. So how can we find peace amid such turbulence?)

Horatio Spafford knew something about life's unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his beloved four-year-old son died of scarlet fever.

Thinking a vacation would do his family some good, he sent his wife and four daughters on a ship to England, planning to join them after he finished some pressing business at home. However, while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the ship was involved in a terrible collision and sunk. More than 200 people lost their lives, including all four of Horatio Spafford's precious daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to her husband that began: "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

Horatio immediately set sail for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship, aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family, summoned Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred.¹

As Horatio thought about his daughters, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and mind. He wrote them down, and they have since become a well-beloved hymn:

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Perhaps we cannot always say that everything is well in all aspects of our lives. There will always be storms to face, and sometimes there will be tragedies. But with faith in a loving God and with trust in His divine help, we can confidently say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Horatio Spafford knew what it was to experience seasons of grief and difficulty. David in the Psalms knew what it was to experience seasons of difficulty. I am sure each one of us today know what it is to experience difficulties, Yet, like Horatio and David and so many other people who have gone before us in history, we can truly say God is our rock, we trust in Him and it is well with our soul.

In every season we look to God, He is our rock and thirdly, He is our refuge.

3) In every season.... God is our refuge.

God is our safe place. In this Psalm David refers to God as his refuge numerous times.

Psalm 46:1 says, 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.'

Psalm 91- a brilliant Psalm to read and pray through. It says: 'Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'

Sometimes, in order to prepare for a new season or when journeying through a tough season, we have to remind ourselves of who God is and that He is our refuge.

A few years ago I volunteered in a Christian hostel in Amsterdam. It was called The Shelter and it was rooted in Psalm 91. It was right in the heart of Amsterdam, amongst the shops and culture there. It was a safe place... a refuge for travellers amidst the craziness that was Amsterdam. At the end of the road was the red light district and I remember the feeling walking into the hostel from the street- a sense of safety and relief. We welcomed travellers from all around the world and we were alcohol and drug free. The travellers who came through could tell that there was something different about The Shelter and I truly believe it was because of the presence of God. I had some great conversations with them about Jesus and faith.

In the midst of chaos or uncertainty, God is our refuge, our safe place, the One who can hold us.

When we know God to be our refuge we can also be a safe place for others. We want to demonstrate the love and the peace and the refuge of God through the way we live our lives and listen to others.

Whatever season you are in today or whatever season you are preparing for, look to God. He is your rock and He is your refuge.

Application

- My encouragement and application for you today is to prepare for a new season by knowing Jesus through:
- **1) Reading the Bible.** Have a reading plan. In September we are starting a 21 day fast and there is a reading plan to go alongside it. I would encourage you to pick this up.

- **2) Worship.** Do you sing, play an instrument, like going for walks? Use this to worship Jesus and look to Him. A.W Tozer said- 'We are saved to worship God. All that Christ has done in the past and all that He is doing now leads to this one end.' Worship shifts our perspective and it reminds us how holy and amazing God is.
- **3) Prayer.** Journal, listen, use the Psalms to pray to God. Sometimes I don't know what to pray so I read a Psalm and I use that guide me.
- We can have a personal relationship with Jesus.
- If we don't know Him personally in our hearts then everything I have shared today will make sense up here in our heads but it won't transform us or prepare us for new seasons.
- Truly to stand firm in every season means to know in our hearts that God is our rock. It means to speak with Him, listen to Him and to worship Him daily.
- **4) My final application/encouragement is for you to pray that God would use you to speak life and truth into other people's seasons.**
- Recently I was on the train to London and I got chatting to the lady next to me. We got deep quite quickly and she started sharing about some situations in her life. I just knew that I need to pray for her and so I asked her and she was really grateful. Because I had experienced God as my rock and refuge, I wanted to pass this on to her. It felt like such a divine encounter.
- As September approaches and a new season is near, let us prepare by looking to God. Let us remember that He is our rock and our refuge. And let us be bold in sharing the hope that comes from Him with the people around us.

Pray

- Ephesians 1:17-19.

'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.'