

Wk 1

Jan. 7, 2023

Call To Worship.

Isaiah 43:1, 18-21

Hymn 1. Doxology.

Hymn 2. Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

Announcements.

Rom. 12:1,2

Hymn 3. Sing Hallelujah to the Lord

Hymn 4. Come Thou Fount

Hymn 5. Jesus Name Above All Names

Hymn 6. God is So Good.

Offering Prayer

Pastoral Prayer.

Sermon Text.

Psalm 11 | God, A Refuge to the Righteous

'In the LORD I take refuge; How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain; For, behold, the wicked bend the bow.

They make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?'

The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.

The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,

And the one who loves violence His soul hates.

Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.

For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face'

The LORD.

The LORD is a Refuge. The LORD is righteous. The LORD is in His holy temple. The LORD's throne is in heaven.

The LORD's eyes are on all people, both righteous and wicked.

And He is testing the righteous and hates those who do violence.

THE LORD will cause an inheritance of the wind on the wicked, nothing, and will cause a fire that does not refine but destroys the wicked.

For the righteous, the LORD will test for the purpose of beholding His face.

Q: Who is God? What is He like? Where is He? What does He do?

We know God principally through virtue. Virtue shows the attributes of God.

Here we see two main attributes of God; the positive is that He loves righteousness, the negative is that He hates violence.

God loves doing what is right. God hates those who do what is wrong. BUT, it doesn't stop at virtue alone.

God does not stop at virtue. Instead, God has a plan to test people.

God's plan is told to us right here. God's plan is to test the righteous.

God tests us so that we would do what is right so that we can become righteous. Know this principle, God is righteous, God loves righteousness, and God is testing you to make you righteous.

God is the same. He has no intention of changing the world, He has every intention of changing you. **Q:** There is a theological word for God changing you, it's called Sanctification.

Why are you Righteous?

Some people grow in righteousness maybe by accident. They have not developed what is called Conscience Competence with regard to righteousness.

They are still trying to figure out in their Christian life how to deliberately be righteous.

Q: How can you deliberately be righteous? 1. By having God as your refuge. **Q:** How is God your refuge? By remaining in the virtue of God's righteousness.

People often wander through life wondering what decisions to make and where to go and what to do? Lacking meaning and purpose.

It is like many people have a vague sense of things. Their spiritual vision in life is foggy at best. They can dimly see the cross but their spiritual defroster needs to be turned on high.

Friends you have to know that God is righteous and His aim is to make your righteous.

We started a whole new year this past week and we are 7 days in; Do you have a plan to deliberately live a righteous life?

Righteousness is a Principle and it is a Principle that God tests His children in.

Now, first and foremost there is no righteousness without Jesus Christ. The only way to come to God is through Jesus Christ. BUT, the principle of Righteousness is accessible to everyone.

Righteousness is accessible to everyone in Jesus Christ.

God is so gracious that He has revealed His righteousness that anyone can take advantage of His righteousness.

When a person, turns from sin, places their faith in Jesus Christ, now God sees you like He sees His Son. BUT, God also sees parts of your life that are not like His Son.

And God saved you just as you are, but He loves you far too much to keep you as you are!

You should be very alarmed if you come to Christ and it's always just the same old same old.

So here you are in a new year, but it's the same you. AND I'm here to tell you as the Pastor that God's plan for you is NOT for you to be the same person at the end of this next year.

The LORD tests the Righteous! So 2024 is a test, and it is a test of your righteousness.

Let me give some really basic examples.

Often in the new year people say, 'I want to lose weight' – that's a big resolution for lots of people. And that's fine, it's not a big deal. You want to do that, that's fine. BUT here is what is so often ignored; God is in charge of that process as well.

Let me give an example. Say you wanted to lose 10lbs this year. 1lb is equivalent to 3500 calories, that's 35,000 in total. The average person eats 2000 calories a day so if you eat 100 least calories a day you would lose 10lbs in a year.

But here's the trouble, you already know, you're going to start that and stop doing it in least than 5 days.

Q: Why is that? Why do people want to accomplish resolutions but almost never accomplish them? Because your problem is NOT the science of dropping the pounds, YOUR PROBLEM is the ART of KEEPING YOUR WORD!

So therefore, we are often unrighteous because of our fleeing the very problems that we are faced with in our life.

So we distract ourselves with all kinds of things that have nothing to do with the test that is sitting on our desk.

Look at David's friends in the Psalm, they recognize the problem and instead of staying righteous by staying in the process of the problem they tell him to run away.

'The wicked flee when no man pursues, but the righteous are as bold as lions' Prov. 28

ALMIGHTY GOD can use any single thing to test your righteousness because He is LORD over everything! This is seen in any simple resolution.

The reason people can't lose the weight is because they can't keep their word, the reason people can't grow the business is because they want stay faithful to being on time, producing a consistent product, and providing kind, customer service... AND that my friends is unrighteousness.

Find what it is that you want to be righteous in and let the LORD test you.

God is not against you; He is for you. But He is for you doing things the way He has established them to be.

v. 3 'if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'

Let me just give this illustration and though it might seem silly, it's the principle within the illustration that I want you to grasp.

Ex. Say a person wants to lose those 10lbs.

They say I will eat 100 less calories a day and I will walk for 10 mins a day.

That's pretty simple. And not very complicated to do. Could you stick to that simple program?

Most people couldn't. The reason has nothing to do with the difficult of the program and everything to do with **the difficult of keeping your word.**

Integrity is the chief principle of Righteousness.

God never breaks His Word that is why He is Righteous. God is always true.

Rom. 9:6 'let God be true and every man a liar'

Heb. 6:18 'it is impossible for God to lie.'

Tit. 1:2 'God never lies'

The chief way for us to grow in Godliness is to simply keep our word.

Liars all around us. The more you grow in keeping your word the more you will see those who do not.

'If any man among you seems to be religious, and does not bridle his tongue that man's religion is in vain' James 1:26

If you would pick one simple thing and keep your word with that one simple thing, you would begin to grow in an incredible amount of righteousness.

The righteous have **Spiritual Integrity.** It doesn't mean they get everything right in life. It means that they live their life right with God.

AND, because they live their life right with God, **God is a refuge to them.**

v. 1 The LORD is a refuge.

Tests.

The best translation of this verb in Hebrew is apply to the **metallurgy process**. The process of stress testing a precious metal.

As the righteous, your life is in the metallurgy process. God is testing you.

If you are taking refuge in Him, that is good, but because you are now in the proximity of Almighty God, the Light of His character is burning out the imperfections of your character.

The closer you get to God, the more your life will be tested by the fire of God. And the more your life is tested by the fire of God the less impurities it has and the more difficulty it has in tolerating other impurities.

In precious metal testing, there are **5 main methods** for analyzing precious metals.

Scratch and Acid testing. Not an accurate method of testing.

Gold Electronic Testing. Not an accurate method of testing.

Fire Assay. This is the most accurate method for testing the purity of the precious metal.

Lab Analysis.

Portable XRF Analysis. **Accurate but requires large, difficult to transport and highly expensive equipment.**

Q: What is the point of God testing the righteous? Two-part. 1. To remove impurities. 2. To produce a vessel of perfection.

God is making the righteous like His Son.

It's like the Southern preacher said, 'When your life is over, do you want God to say, Well Done! OR You 'bout to be well-done!'

There's only two ways for God to burn a person, through the testing of life or through eternal hell fire.

v.6 'upon the wicked He will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.'

I've always found it ironic those people who will say that they want go to church because it's all fire and brimstone. But, frankly that's very telling. It's only fire and brimstone for those who the LORD is testing that way; the wicked.

There is an **alternative testing for the righteous**. It is through the fire of purification.

Taking Refuge in the LORD is the way by which to endure the testing of your life.

Precious Metals are used throughout the Bible. Gold, Silver, Iron, Tin, Lead.

After 6000 years of world history and technology development it remains that the best way to test precious metals is through fire, and the way it happens is by drawing closer to God.

It remains that the best way to test the Christian is through the fire of life's battles.

The stress testing of precious metals is tedious and time-consuming, yet the most accurate way to prove the worth of the metal is through this testing.

Anything that is going to withstand the fire must be put through the fire.

David knows that His confidence is going to be in the fact that God is righteous, He is righteous because of His dependence on God, and God is testing Him for the purpose of further righteousness.

God does not waste our trials and they are not pointless. God tests the righteous to make the righteous more righteous.

We do not know specifically what the trial is that David is facing, is it Goliath, is it Saul's jealousy, is it Absalom's rebellion. We don't know. But we do know his friends tell him to run away.

v. 1 'flee like a bird to the mountain'

Here is part of the test. Will you run or will you stay?

The Psalmist is being advised to run from the problem. Fly away like a bird retreating to a mountain sanctuary.

The worst advice anyone can give you is to quit in the middle of your problem. That is some of the worst advice anyone could ever give you.

It would be the theological equivalent of the big-rig truck driver who is on a long haul delivery putting the 18-wheeler in park in the middle of rush hour traffic.

It would be the theological comparison of having the greatest steak in the world placed directly in front of you and you start crying because you don't know how to use the fork and the knife.

Learn that your problems are God's way of getting you ready for promotion.

Ps. 75:6-7 'For promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the north or south. But God is the judge; He puts one down, and sets another up.'

Let's not get this confused. We are to run from sin. We are to flee the sins of our age. Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife, but he took refuge in God in a prison.

It is better to rest in God in prison than to rest in an adulterous in luxury.

Principally, we are to run from sin, BUT, **we are not to run from our responsibilities**. God tests us through our responsibilities.

If sin is at your door lock the latch. If responsibility is at the door make it a cup of coffee.

Make friends with your responsibilities because this is God's plan to bless you. 'no discipline is pleasant at the time' Heb. 12

David has a responsibility to stay. Q: The question is asked in V. 3, If the foundations are removed what will the righteous do? A rhetorical question, offered as a response to the doubting friends of David.

These are Common responses from people who are interrupting your testing.

Your best friend is NOT the person who gets you to avoid your testing. Your best friend IS the person who encourages to stay in your problem, take personal responsibility, and have confidence in the refuge of the LORD.

The person who says...

'You ought to just leave' 'Just quit and move on' 'What's the point?' 'You'll never get ahead' 'Are you really the right fit here?' 'You just don't fit in' 'You don't measure up' 'We don't like you', I remember when I was in middle school a very popular girl walked up to me and said, 'You know David, nobody likes you'

And I remember thinking to myself...Oh I know someone you don't know. What a friend we have in Jesus.

...that person is bending their bow and shaping their arrows right at destroying the foundations of your life!

Forgotten people are the people who forgot their responsibilities and did not pass the test in their hour of testing.

Questions about the unfaithful. The unfaithful are those who run from their responsibilities.

Does anyone remember the name of the board members who plotted to get Charles Spurgeon fired?

Does anyone know the Congregationalists who got Edwards removed from his pastorate?

Whatever ever happened to the Deacons who disagreed with ML-J years before he was elevated to a worldwide stage in London?

What about the professor that put Billy Graham on academic probation for a year?

What about the 3 elders who called for a special elder meeting at Grace Community Church, saying Dr. MacArthur's expositional preaching was too boring and not contemporary enough to keep the attention of people in the 70's and 80's?

Well, 150 years later...

Spurgeon is remembered as the Prince of Preachers and we don't know who it was that got him fired.

Edwards is regarded as America's greatest theologian and the New Lights of the Great Awakening dimmed out.

ML-J's is in direct competition with Dr. MacArthur as the greatest preacher of the 20th century.

And you...How will you be remembered?

Will you make friends with your responsibilities or will you see them as enemies to avoid?

Have you ran from your problems? Do you need to come back and face your responsibilities?

I want you to learn to not run from your responsibilities, let God test you in them.

Friend that was a CEO.

I'm friends with a man who used to be the CEO of a business that has a free-cash flow **of over a billion dollars a year.**

I knew him as a wealthy Christian CEO. He knew me as a man that preached the Bible regularly. He came into some major problems with his board of directors. He told me about the problems. I told him DO NOT quit. Whatever happens, don't quit.

The next month he quit.

They gave him a large payout, large enough to where he hasn't worked for a few years. And that has become the biggest problem in his life, that he hasn't worked in a few years. He's had no responsibilities.

Some people act like that is the ultimate achievement in life; to get to where you are responsible for nothing.

Has lost off of his strength, all of his virtue, and the best way for his to flex muscle is through possessions that are fading, and the best way for him to floss virtue is to virtue signal attitudes that even those who are on the periphery know are not truly owned.

He flew like a bird to the mountains and was paid a first class fair to get there!

The Battle of Thermopile.

When the 10,000 Persians came to fight the 300 Spartans in the Battle of Thermopile, it was recorded that a Persian arrogantly said 'Our arrows are so many, that they will block out the sun!'

A Spartan replied 'Then I guess we will fight in the shade.'

Friends, v.2 'the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow, they shoot at the upright in heart'

Don't be afraid of the dark, Take Refuge in the LORD. God gave us the greater light to navigate by day and the lesser light to seek His confidence by night. Do not let the shade of life concern you or knock you off course.

There is the type of person that runs from their problems. Gets intimidated by their problems. Then there is the type of person that sees their problems for what they are worth.

The problems are tools to build. Responsibilities to refine. They are tests from God.

Be Like the Buffalo that turns directly into the storm.
Your problems and your responsibilities are directly tied together.

So, Do NOT avoid your testing. Look at your life. What are your enemies? Do you think that your enemies are the arrows? Do you think your enemies are those who bend the bow? They are not!

Your enemy is **coached deep** in your responsibilities. You must see the responsibilities of your life as your key focus of how God is shaping your character and destiny.

If you will take ownership of the responsibilities of your life, there will be no end to what God can do in your life, BUT, If you will not take ownership of your responsibilities, it will end what God is doing in your life.

God does not work in isolation from us. God takes His eyes and examines the life of His people.

If you want success, then what you want is responsibilities, because God has designed a world where the only way you have legitimate success is to uphold legitimate responsibilities.

Average people want comfort. Evil people want status without service. They want a life without responsibilities.

David was the anointed King of Israel. Saul had become a problem in his life. But the obvious problem of Saul **DID NOT negate the obvious responsibility** to lead the kingdom!

Saul's jealousy, Absalom's rebellious power plays, Goliath's pagan defiance, and David's own personal sins, **DID ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to remove the responsibilities** God had put on his life!

God made a covenant with David and that covenant would test him the rest of his life.

So he responds, **'if the foundations are removed what can the righteous do?'** – the Righteousness of God is the foundation of the world.

Q: Why would God give you more responsibilities if you haven't taken care of basic ones?

'to whom much is given much is expected'

God has given you salvation, why wouldn't He expect more righteousness. God have given you as a Light to the World, why would He test you to shine, He has given you as a Salt to the earth, why wouldn't He expect you to be tasteful?

v. 5 'God tests the righteous'

After careful examination, He scrutinizes His righteous.

God looks at their driving record and sees that they have been slightly off course, so ensures they get a ticket for rolling through the stop sign. Then the person says, to the officer 'but there was nobody even in sight?' – Too often we flee the pop quizzes of God.

1 degree off course over 1 kilometer is an entire kilometer off course at your destination. How will you find the pearl hidden in the field if you're off by 1 degree?

God scrutinizes you because you are special to Him!

Do you really want a life where God doesn't test you? Do you really want a life where God turns a blind eye to your life? Do you want a life where God leaves you to your own devices?
Thank God, God

Does the mechanic scrutinize the engine that he ISN'T working on?

By the way, that's what this word 'test' means. It has a detailed understanding of two main things; scrutiny and the other closest explanation is the metallurgy process, the testing of precious metals.

Dad disciplines you because He doesn't have doubts about you.

Mom bothers you because the thing that bothers her the most is your future.

Coach critiques you because He cares about you.

God looks down from Heaven upon His creation and He coordinates every exacting detail of your life for your personal benefit.

The Gospel is that God is looking at every small detail of your life, and coordinating every small event to bring about the absolute greatest good to you...

Did you think it was Satan that you were having trouble paying your bills. Did you think it was a demon that was blocking your progress?

Look at our Savior, Satan offered Him all the stick built homes in the Roman Empire, God gave Him one stick to die on.

Don't run from your problems. Don't credit Satan with your problems. If Satan gave you the problem then Satan must give you the Solution.

If God gave you Your problem, then He gave you the Your problem to Be Your Solution. **Take Refuge in the LORD.**

Math starts to get hard when you replace the numbers with letters, and you start to think, my goodness, I was just starting to learn the letters and now they put them into math? Let me make it simple, the letters just represent a number you haven't found yet.

I don't know carpentry but somebody wanted me to do a back cut with a 45 degree angle and at the time I could of swore it was spiritual warfare. But the reality was, my hour of testing had come. There was a righteous way to do the back cut. There was a righteous way to use the tools. I just didn't know what the righteous way was.

I'm a very unrighteous carpenter. But I know a righteous Carpenter.

I know you think that letter in that math equation is from Satan, but it's not, it just the truth from God that you have come to understand yet. Stay in the problem! Don't flee like a bird to the mountain. Don't skip your spiritual math classes.

The Solution to the problem is what is behind the letters. He is the Alpha and the Omega and if you pull Him out of the equation then **things will never add up!**

The results of solving problems without God in solution.

You'll build a house, but not fill it with His Spirit.

You'll graduate the program, but you'll realize you still have passed God's test yet.

You'll get a big package on your front door, but not answer the mail of God.

If God is causing you to take a Spiritual Algebra class, don't call unclean what He has called clean, **'Arise kill and eat'** the problem. Because God gave it to you specially for your own testing.

Isaiah 45:5-7 'I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.'

Now please stick with me on this. Because there is a way that we live in the face of God and there is a way that God develops righteousness.

v. 3 If the foundations are destroyed what will the righteous do?

Diligence builds righteousness. All lasting foundations are built in righteousness.

Diligence is not just doing stuff. Diligence is not just being busy. Diligence is not just move around like you live in a pinball machine.

Diligence is focused, specific effort. Intelligent effort.

It is far more difficult to take flour and measure the flour, and eggs and crack them properly, and vanilla and put in the proper amount, than it is to just take all the materials and throw them against the wall.

Just because you have all the components of a cherry pie in your house, DOES NOT mean you have a cherry pie in your house.

You have to put it all together. And though God is giving us all of the components to behold His face, we are often like spiritual bakers who don't want to follow the recipe or who want to get pulled out of the oven.

God is testing you. God is cooking you. God has put you together.

The only thing different between you and everything else in the world is the God loves you more than everything else in the world.

God created the trees. God created the animals. God created fish that swims and the bird that flies. BUT, God loves you more than trees, more than animals, more than fish that swim and birds that fly.

And God is teaching you to swim in the current better than the Salmon and fly to the heights better than the eagle.

Legitimate Christians will never go extinct.

You can dam up the waters and God will spawn us in new places. You can remove our nests and God will create sanctuary cities where He governs His people. **THE LORD is our REFUGE!**

'You will mount up with wings like eagles. You will run and not grow weary you will walk and not faint' Is. 40:31

In your testing, You will be reminded 'That if God be for us, who can be against us'
The Holy Spirit will call to your recall 'the He will never leave you nor forsake you'

Perseverance builds righteousness.

God is creating His righteousness in His people by the attribute of perseverance. The only way to develop perseverance is to be tested with problems.

In perseverance there is a competing view that sounds nice but misses the mark.

'Out of the night that covers me, Black as the Pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods that be for my unconquerable soul. In the fell clutch of circumstance. I have not winced nor cried aloud, under the bludgeoning's of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed. Beyond this place of wrath and tears looms but the horror of the shade. And yet the menace of the years finds and shall find me, unafraid. It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.' Invictus

I have always appreciated Mr. Henley's determination. But I do not agree with his destination. I cannot master fate and I cannot captain my soul.

If I was the captain of my soul, I'd be AWOL before lunch formation. As It is, God keeps us safe in the Divine Formation. We can adjust our gig-line, blouse our boots, and be inspection ready, but it is God who keeps us secure.

The LORD is my refuge! The LORD is my strength whom shall I fear.

**I love the fear of the LORD because it causes me to fear nothing else!
Stonewall Jackson was once asked in the middle of the Civil War, 'Why are you so fearless in battle?' Jackson replied 'My religious beliefs have taught me to feel as safe in battle as in bed.'**

Friends, Do not run from the problems of your life, run to God. Run to God and stay in problems.

Find problems, Find God, Find Solutions.

God gives you problems to bless you. To change you. To build you. God gives you problems because He has confidence in you that you will trust in Him. Take refuge in Him.

You and I do not get to glory in our sufferings, God gets the glory in our sufferings.

The testing is not ours for determining but it is ours for committing. We can commit to staying in the problem.

Surrender to God by surrendering to doing what is right in the circumstances that God has given you.

Communion. (1 Cor. 11) – God tests the Righteous to become righteous.

Pastoral Prayer.

Hymn 7. Jesus Paid It All

Hymn 8. I Surrender All.

Benediction.

Rom. 15:5-6, 13

Small Group Questions.

1. How is God a refuge to us?
2. What does it mean to be righteous?
3. What does it mean that the Psalmist is being asked to flee to the mountains?
4. Why does God test the righteous?
5. How do we do in God's testing? Are we good students?