

TASTE AND SEE

Psalm 34:8-10

As we prepare to come to the Table of the Lord this morning, I invite you to open your Bible to **Psalm 34:8-10**.

During a Paris mission trip in 2007, we attended church that morning and had evening commitments that night, but for the three hours or so in between we had some free time, so I decided to venture out on my own. Not a stone's throw from our little hotel was the Chateau de Vincennes, a 12th century castle complex, where beginning with Louis VII, the kings of France spent a good bit of their time. I decided to check it out—the drawbridge, the massive moat, the residence, the church. Not all of it was open to visitors, but I was impressed with what I could see. By the time I finished my little tour, I still had time on my hands.

Most of the shops in Vincennes are closed on Sunday, but I did find a pastry shop open. And if you ever get to France, you've got to try the pastries. I had been trying different ones most every morning, but on this Sunday afternoon I decided to live on the edge. I ordered a *trois chocolat*—a chocolate pastry with three different kinds of chocolate. I'd been trying to lose a little weight, so I had avoided chocolate all week. But it was Sunday, and I think somewhere in the Bible it says that calories count less on Sunday. So I anted up a couple of euros and took my *trois chocolat* to a little park, sat on a bench, and prepared to enjoy it. Man, it looked good! But it also looked rich and fattening. "*I'll just eat a couple of bites,*" I said to myself. First bite—WOW!—this thing is going to make the dessert tray at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Then I took a second bite—my last bite, I promised myself—Not! And I'll be dogged if I didn't eat that whole thing and then felt so sad when I swallowed the last bite that, like the social doofus I am, I licked the paper it was wrapped in. I told everybody on the mission

team: “*Did I tell you about my trois chocolat? One of the best things I’ve ever put in my mouth. It is the chocolate of chocolates. You’ve got to taste this thing to believe it.*” That little dude was goooo-od.

And the way I felt about my *trois chocolat* is the way the psalmist feels about God. Hear the word of the Lord ... (**read the text**).

See what I mean? I had tasted a *trois chocolat* and had to tell everybody how good it was. The psalmist had tasted God and had to tell everybody how good God is: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*”

I

The word *taste* means “to find out by experience.” “*Don’t just take my word for it,*” says the psalmist, “*try God and find out for yourself.*” And the psalmist is a man who had certainly had opportunities to try God for himself. The psalmist is David. The little superscription above the psalm tells us that David wrote this psalm after he had “*pretended to be insane in the presence of Abimelech, who drove him out, and he departed.*” Do you remember that story? You’ll find it in 1 Samuel 21. The only difference is that the name in 1 Samuel is Achish rather than Abimelech. The word *Abimelech* means literally “my father the king.”¹ It could be that the title Abimelech was to the Philistines what the title Pharaoh was to Egypt or President is to the United States. Still, the Achish story in 1 Samuel 21 is surely the story to which the editors refer with this superscription. David was on the run from Saul. He thought he could find safe hiding among the Philistines. But the servants of Achish recognized David and told Achish who he was. “*Not good,*” thought David. He knew his life would be in jeopardy. So he faked insanity. He made unintelligible marks on the doors

¹Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1983), 278.

of the gate and drooled spit down into his beard. Achish saw that and said, *“He may once have been a mighty warrior, but now he’s just plain crazy. Don’t we have enough crazy people as it is? Run him out of town, and yesterday wouldn’t be too soon.”* So David escaped with his life.

And that experience spawned this psalm. It is an acrostic psalm based on the Hebrew alphabet minus the letter *waw*. So it’s not a spontaneous outburst of praise; it’s the result of reflection. It’s a psalm of thanksgiving with traces of wisdom teaching thrown in for good measure. You get the flavor of it right out of the gate: *“I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.”* David reminds us that it’s not just when things are good that we give thanks; we give thanks at all times, we praise always—because the *Lord* is good at all times, the Lord is good always. And according to the psalm, everybody is to get in on the praise: the humble (v.2), the poor (v. 6), the righteous (v. 15), even the brokenhearted and those crushed in spirit (v. 18). No pit is too deep, no trouble too dire, no pain too great, and no struggle too intense to silence the thanksgiving and praise of those who depend upon the Lord.

But that’s not because we’re so strong. The actions of the psalmist are dependent actions: he seeks (v. 4), he cries to the Lord (vv. 6, 17), he takes refuge (v. 8). Those are not actions born out of strength; those are actions born out of dependence and need—like a child in pain calling out for his mama, like a frightened child finding comfort in the refuge of her daddy’s arms, like a man afraid for his life in an enemy’s camp. We don’t give thanks at all times because we’re strong.

We can give thanks at all times because God is good. That means God is kind, dependable, trustworthy. In this psalm, David recounts the actions of God as evidence of his goodness:

- he answers (v. 4),
- he rescues (v. 4),
- he hears (v. 6),
- he saves (v. 6),
- he provides (v. 10),
- he protects (v. 20),
- and he redeems (v. 22).

God is good and strong enough to deliver his children. God is no 98-pound weakling. God doesn't wring his hands, powerless to answer our cries or deliver us from our fears and our troubles. God acts. Because he's God he acts in his own time and in his own way, but he acts. And because God is good, he acts from a good heart and with a good purpose. And when he acts, somebody's going to get delivered, somebody's going to get saved, some enemy is going to be punished, and some desperate situation is going to become the lyric for a psalm of praise.

II

Even though David composed this psalm on the heels of what could have been a death sentence at the hands of King Achish, **this wasn't the first time David had experienced the deliverance of God**. He defeated a bear and a lion to rescue his sheep. He took out the "Philistine Frankenstein" named Goliath with a slingshot and a rock. He often escaped the evil intents of King Saul. God had pulled David's hind end out of the fire more times than he could count. That's why he calls on the reader of the psalm to taste and see that the Lord is good. "*Try Him out,*" says David. "*And you'll find out in your experience what I've found out in mine: God hears*

our cries. God answers our prayers. God delivers us from our fears. God saves us from our troubles. Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

I know what some of you are thinking. You're thinking, *“That's not always true.”* God doesn't always do these things, does he? What about unanswered prayers? What about faithful believers who don't get their cancer cured, who don't walk away from accidents, who don't come home from war, whose troubles hound them to their grave? What about them? We find that answer when we look at this psalm through New Testament eyes. And you know what we find. We find Romans 8.

- We find that verse that asks, *“If God is for us, who is against us”* (8:31)?
- We find that verse that states: *“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”* (8:28).
- We find those verses that declare: *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (8:38-39).

That's what we find. We find an eternal perspective. We find that even if troubles or cancers or accidents plague a believer to his grave, the believer sheds such things at the door of heaven and throws them on the pile of wheelchairs and crutches and prosthetics and white canes and hearing aids and dentures and glass eyes and hospital beds and prescription bottles, never to pick them up again. Or to put it another way, even if trouble takes a lead into the bottom of the ninth inning, trouble is going to lose every time.

III

And there is no better illustration of that than the Lord's Table.

Did anyone know more trouble in this life than Jesus?

- Descended from heaven to earth.
- Took on the limitations, the aches and pains of human flesh.
- Was tempted in all ways like we are, yet without sin.
- Constantly misunderstood.
- Hounded, tested, criticized and rejected by most of his own.
- Abandoned by His friends.
- Arrested on bogus charges.
- Convicted in an illegal court on the testimony of lying witnesses.
- Beaten to within an inch of his life.
- And nailed to a cross to die where he bore our sins in his body and suffered so deeply he cried, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

No one has seen more trouble than Jesus. And yet did trouble win the day? No! Jesus won the day. Killed and buried on Friday. Still dead on

Saturday. But then came Sunday. Then came resurrection. Then came life. Then came victory.

And Jesus' victory can be our victory when we trust in him and depend on him. The songwriter said it well

There is no problem so big

God cannot solve it.

There is no mountain to tall

He cannot move it.

There is no storm too dark

God cannot calm it.

There is no sorrow too deep

He cannot soothe it.

If He carried the weight of the world

Upon His shoulder

I know, my brother, that He will carry you.

And that's what the Lord's Table reminds us of today. Jesus can carry you. He died for your sins. He rose from the dead. He is with us always even to the end of the age. He can carry you. He can carry you when your soaring on eagles' wings. He can carry you when your life is in shambles. These elements representing Jesus' broken body and shed blood remind us that ...

his love is enduring,

his mercy is rich,

his salvation is complete,

his presence is constant,

and his grace is enough.

IV

That's the testimony of the psalm. And that's my testimony too. It's born out of experience. Taste and see for yourself. It's a tried and true recipe that mixes up a batch of thanksgiving and praise. This is not like a recipe card that's been tried one time and returned to the back of the box because it tasted like mud. It's not like the recipe card that is pure white from lack of use. This recipe is an old reliable. It's the card that's yellowed with use and is stained with a drop or two of tomato sauce or vanilla extract. That's why David tells us to taste and see that the Lord is good. Taste and see. Don't just read the recipe card; taste the product. You'll see that the Lord is good, and you'll find a song of thanksgiving in your heart.

Do you believe this? Well, we've got the signs of his body and blood in our hands this morning. Come, taste and see.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Come to the Table, all you who know Christ as Savior and Lord.

Bring your sorrows and your sins

Bring your worries and your wounds

Bring your troubles and your trials

and come.

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

He is the one who saves you

and delivers you

and redeems your life from the pit.

Come to his Table and remember that

and remember him
Come, taste and see.

PRAYER

We praise you, our Father, for who you are and what you do. Who are we that you should love us and save us? We confess our sin and our unworthiness. We thank you for your forgiveness and grace. We thank you for meeting us when life is good and when life is broken. We thank you for the many times you have delivered us from our fears and from our troubles. And we thank you that Jesus' death and resurrection means that one day we'll be delivered for good.

Meet us now in the bread and cup, in your body and blood, and show us yet again how good you are. In Jesus' name—Amen.

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