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Message: Lead, Guide, and Protect

Transcribed Message

December 7, 2025

Psalm 5

This morning, things may be a little bit different in your bulletin. Now, two reasons for this. One, we need a reason to just pause and reflect. Sheryl called me about midway through the week and said, did you mess up the bulletin? Because there's a lot of blank spaces. I immediately had a panic attack and then thought, oh wait, no, no, I did not. That was intentional. So those boxes, we're going to go through the message and in that, it's an opportunity for you to pause, to think about your life, your walk, and to think about the questions there. There'll be some prompts on the screen. But in that, it gives you just a moment to think through those points as we dig into Psalm 5.

And the second reason I did that is last time I was up here, one of the staff members said I feel like I'm in school. Every time you go up there, there's always so many notes and I'm chasing around the bulletin. So, I was a little self-conscious. A little bit of both playing into why we're going to head this direction.

And so with that, we're going to dive into Psalm 5 this morning. And it is a Psalm of David. And in that, there is a ton about David and his struggles, about what he walked through. We see his entire life kind of play out through the struggles of what he wrestles with God and how he needs that comfort, how he needs to pour out his heart. It's more than just the surface. It's a deeper level. It's really the impact that God is having on his life and the struggles and the pressures weighing down upon him as he walks through his life. So, I'm going to read the first six verses. I'm going to pray over our service and then we'll dive in.

Lead me in your righteousness. Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry. My King and my God, for to you do I pray. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice. In the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and I watch. You are not a God who delights in wickedness. Evil may not dwell with

you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

And Father, as we look into your word this morning, I pray that the things which I've written down and the thoughts that you've put in my mind and my heart are what your people hear and what they receive. I pray for the power of your Holy Spirit to do this work, Lord, for I'm just a man. And I pray that I fade away and that they hear your words, that they're able to think through your scriptures and to see how it applies to their lives as we look at the life of David. So be with us now this morning and we do all these things by the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

All right, so let's start off with just a little bit of background. I feel like every time I teach, I'm kind of coming in, well, you've gone through a different book and now we're stepping away to something new. And so, in the book of Psalms, in Psalm 5, we're seeing David's life. We're seeing the struggles that he has. We're seeing how challenging it was for all the different things that were going on around him. Now, this Psalm specifically, we're not given at what point in his life. There's no word or place or thing that's happening that we can clearly say, ah, this is this moment in time. Sometimes the commentators look at it and say, well, this obviously was when Absalom's rebellion rose up and this was David being cast out and struggling with the battle of trying to find how to walk through this boldly. How do I do this by faith when there's enemies all around me? There's no specific connotation within that that says this is exactly where we are, but it is a good way to kind of frame the story.

But if you look at the entirety of David's life, how many times was he forced to wait to see something to come to fruition? God had already given him a promise, but it didn't immediately come. Many, many times. How many times do you see David's actions lead to others being hurt? And he has to wrestle through that, that emotion. And ultimately seeing his own family struggle as he tries to lead the nation. Seeing the hurts of his children as they impact each other's lives. And so, he's got a lot to be praying about. He's got a lot that he needs to lay out before the Lord. And that's why it is said that David was a man after God's own heart, because he had so much that he needed to lay before the Lord. And I think that's a good way for us to live our lives as well, is that we should be constantly seeking after him.

Another way to look at it is maybe this was just Tuesday. Maybe in all the struggles that he's walking through, that this is just every day. And I think that's how it kind of applies to us. See, we're not kings, we're not rulers, but we have to walk through struggles. And how do we do it honoring God? How do we do it seeking God and asking for his protection, for his wisdom? Not for the, you know, the almighty strength to go destroy those who oppose me, but for the patience, for the consistency, for the dedication to know that the world may be rising up against me, but I have to stay faithful to the call of Christ.

Another beautiful thing within the psalm itself is that it's this great contrast between two forces. It's the enemies against God, and it's the children of God. And so, he kind of bounces back and forth, looking at both sides of that. He pits the acts of wickedness against the faithful obedience of God's children. He also is pointing out the fact that God rules and reigns over all of it. There's nothing outside of his purview. God sees all the inner workings of the hearts. He sees all this landscape and all the struggles that are going on between his people and then neighboring countries, and he's in that mix, and he walks through it with them.

Now if we look at the psalm itself, all 12 verses, an easy way to kind of break it down is three distinct chunks. So first, we prepare to meet the Lord, verses 1 through 3. Second, we seek to please the Lord, verses 4 through 6. And finally, we submit to the Lord, verses 7 through 12. First, we need to get our hearts right. Not to say our lives. We don't need to show up to the Lord in all perfection, the happy plastic people with no problems, no struggles, nothing that's pressing you down. He just simply wants you to show up and say, I am broken and in need of a savior.

And through that, we're going to cleanse our minds and our hands. He's going to allow you to dwell upon the things that reside within your heart, to take a moment to think about what you're walking through. What things does God not like about my life? Only as we draw close to him do those things become readily apparent. They kind of boil to the surface because we start understanding his word and the depth of what it means in our life. And finally, it's the surrendering of our will, giving up and saying, I can't do this alone. I have no strength. I'm not worthy to stand before the king, that I am a broken vessel. And so, all of that will play out through the psalm as we dig in.

So, with that as a backdrop, let's look again at verse 1. Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my groaning. This verse makes me think of how often in life do we just want someone to hear us. Do we want someone to listen? I am 100% guilty. I have two amazing daughters and a wonderful wife, and I grew up with a bunch of brothers. The word "love" was used sparingly in my home. Hugs were only at funerals and weddings. We weren't a big, emotional, gushy family. But my kids and my wife, they have emotions and they're icky and I have to deal with that. But when I first started in our marriage, I was so obstinate. I focused on just solving the problem. I even remember, as horrible as it sounds, using the words don't bring me problems, bring me solutions. To a young girl who's crying because so-and-so toy broke or so-and-so said something mean, that doesn't work, right? God listens. God wants to hear.

And more than that, in this we see that he's asking God to listen to the innermost thoughts. Those things, the pains, the hurts, the stuff that you don't share with other people. This could be things that I'm too ashamed to even give voice to. This is stuff that I would never speak out loud, but God wants to hear that. These could be pains that have existed in my life for a time and a season, and it hurts to think about. It hurts to drudge up those memories. Even contemplating it brings you back to that moment, and it's a struggle. God wants you to lay those at his feet. Or maybe it's things that are so trivial that you're like, I shouldn't struggle with this. This shouldn't be a problem. But yet it comes up again and again, or it's prompted by this or by that. God wants to hear those things too. No matter how big or how small, God wants to be a part of that.

As I was going through, this is the opportunity where I thought, what are those hurts that you hold close? And if you're so bold to sketch that out in the little section that I gave you, or jot down a bullet point list of those things, what are those things in all the different flavors that you walk through? See, I went through this myself, and there are a myriad of things, small and large, which I carry that I shouldn't, that I should turn over to the Lord. And so as a moment of reflection, I'm assuming, likewise, you probably have some also to think upon. So, you'll see that section in there. By all means, take notes, share it in your community groups, if you're so bold. Share it in the ride home. It's just an idea or a starting point for you to think about those things in your life.

As we continue, we look back at Psalm 4:1. Because again, we see that David is asking. Answer me when I call, O my God of righteousness. You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me when you hear my prayer. Constantly, David comes back again, asking to be heard. And God never fails. He hears him in that. He understands those struggles.

Now, in the greater canon of the Scripture, we see others bring things to God. We hear Paul laying out the struggles that he walks through with whatever physical infirmity he had, and he just asked God to take it away. But the response is simple, that my grace is sufficient. God doesn't always take it away. What about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane? What about Jesus when he prayed and he asked God, is there any other way? Take this cup from me. There was no other way. Not my will. Your will be done. He's giving us that boldness to ask, even when the answer is no. Because he's going to give us the comfort to take that next step and that next step.

As we continue, we look at verse two. It says, give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. He calls out the two natures of God that we need to make sure we understand. First, he is our King. He is the sovereign ruler that we should pledge our allegiance to. He is the one that we should submit to his authority as being the one in charge of our lives.

And second, he is our God. He is the almighty, the one that we should worship, the one who we shouldn't put others ahead of or before. We should honor him by being willing to lay down all of those things, the distractions, the struggles, the hobbies, the things that we put as a greater priority, that take our mind and our time. Are we willing to surrender those to the Lord? And do we hold the same view? Is God our King? Is God our true God that we put no other before him? Those are things that I was thinking through as I was reading through the Psalms that David understood his position, and he understood who God was, and he had seen him rescue him many times through his own personal struggles and failures. And he concludes that he would put no allegiance to any other idol in his life.

I think for me that was really the question. What things can be a distraction to the point that it takes my mind and my heart away from God? And am I willing to lay those things aside? I always go back to the book of Daniel and to the story of Shadrach,

Meshach, and Abednego. Unto death they had to make a choice. Will you bow down and worship or will you stay faithful to your God? And here's their response. Daniel 3:16-18. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, you have no need, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from this burning, fiery furnace. And he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. Are we willing like that to sacrifice our own lives to stay true to God? Many around the world face persecution and will hold to the promise of who God is. And we, likewise, need to walk that same journey in our lives.

In this same verse, if we continue, we look at verse 3. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice. In the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and I watch. He puts importance upon that morning timeframe. If we looked at the very end of Psalm 4, he's talking about an evening Psalm. And he ends that section by simply saying, in peace I both lie down and sleep. For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. And then here in verse 3, he's talking about rising early and seeking the Lord. And it paints this beautiful picture that we should lie down in the safety and comfort of knowing who our God and Father is, and then we should rise early again and seek after him. Whatever happens during the day, those things will weigh on us but surrender those at the foot of the cross. And don't pick them back up in the morning. Instead, seek him for the strength to go about it again and again. That should be our daily routine, because it sets the tone of how we should live our lives, to press into the promises and to lay down the struggles and the hardships and the things that will not only distract us and pull us away from his word and time and fellowship with the body, but also become a burden, something that becomes a crux. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in that we're unable to even move forward, and it becomes kind of a stumbling block that we need to stay in that place of worry and fear and doubt. And God doesn't want that for us. He didn't want that for David, and he doesn't want that for the rest of his people, for all time.

In the verse, it says, prepare. He's talking about preparing the sacrifice, and this is a complex Hebrew word. It has many, many different connotations. The first of which is the arranging of the wood on the altar. They were very specific on how they would put

it together, because it was an honor to do that. More than that, it's preparing the animal for sacrifice. They had a prescribed method by which they would slaughter and cut up the animal to put on the sacrifice. It was all ordered and structured, because it was part of your worship.

It also can mean a soldier arriving to give honor to the commander in charge, to falling under his leadership and authority. It was very regal. It was pomp and circumstance. You would want to do that. You would want to be in the presence of the commander, to see the direction that he would give for the troops to move here and to get things accomplished.

And like that, we see that David's prayer life, it was that sweet manna from heaven. He would get up early, he would collect the day's provision, and he would set about the work that God has established him to do. And so that's another challenge for each and every one of us. What does your prayer time look like? And what do you want it to look like? Are you rising early with a cup of coffee in the sunrise? Are you sitting quietly and pondering what God has for you? Not dwelling upon the past, but laying it out and asking for more guidance? And if not, what would you like it to look like? What would an ideal prayer time look like for you? For some, it's truly being set apart and alone. For some, it's corporately together. Whatever that looks like, make it a priority and focus on it. We see that throughout the Psalms, we see that in the life of Jesus, because he made priority to set aside that time.

Now as we transition, we look at verse four, and this is where David is going to be seeking to please the Lord. For you are not a God who delights in the wickedness. Evil may not dwell with you. There are, without a doubt, things that God hates. There are things in our lives, there are things in this world about the things that people do, and those are the things that we need to stay away from. Now as believers, we're challenged to do the things which God loves. If we look at Hebrews 11:6, it says, but without faith, it is impossible to please him. For he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. See, faith gives us the strength to press in and to keep going deeper and deeper in that relationship. That's what he wants. He wants a friendship. He doesn't want to be a social media friend who you like things here and there, but truly somebody you're pouring out your heart with,

you're conversing with, you're learning from, you're going deeper. Have that relationship that's true and genuine with God.

Now the ones that he talks about here, the evildoers, these are more than just your average sinners. These are people who have become obstinate, who have hurt the furtherance of the gospel. Think of Pharaoh, whose heart was hardened multiple times. He was dead set on not letting the people go. Think of those that opposed the spread of the gospel throughout the generations. Those who were so eager to destroy Christians and to stop the spread of the gospel. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, those who heard that message, who saw what Jesus was doing and said, this surely cannot be. We must find a way to stop this. What things in the text do we see where God clearly separates himself from evil? What situations, what circumstances? I think of Satan and the angels that fell from heaven, separated from the presence of God. I think of Adam and Eve. After they had sinned, they were cast out of the garden to be separate. I think of Cain after killing Abel. He couldn't stay in the presence of the Lord and he was cast away. And so, we see that God being all good, all pure, must separate himself from evil.

And that is the same challenge that comes to each one of us. Do we separate ourselves from the evil things in our life? And that can be thoughts, that can be actions, that can be words. Do we seek to do what's right and to stay away from those things that are a temptation to fall back into those bad and sinful behaviors of our past or the things that we see in the world? I think one of the biggest struggles is that those things will constantly be popping up.

C.S. Lewis wrote this, we do not hate sin enough to get upset at the wickedness and godlessness around us. Bombarded as we are by so much media, evil, and violence, we've grown accustomed to the darkness. How sad is that? When C.S. Lewis wrote that, think of how much has changed and yet how much we're still the same. Think of all the things we now accept and call agreeable. The things that we see and, oh, that's just the way it is. How dark this world is and all the things, yet we're challenged to be a light and that's exactly what the text is saying here. Stay away from those things and be pure, be holy. Seek to honor the word and all the things that have gone before you. Be an example for the next generation to come.

We are called to hate the things that God hates. So, what does that look like in your life? If you had to do a self-evaluation, what do those things look like that God would call unclean or evil in our own lives? Each of us has a struggle. It could be something very public, it could be something very private, it could be something you never share or something you constantly ask for help with. That's the challenge and that's why I put that next box. What are those things? Is it something you're able to share? Is it something you're able to ask for help with? The beauty of our relationship with the Lord is that we're also in a body of believers where we have like-minded brothers and sisters to encourage us, to strengthen us, to walk with us. We see that in David's life, we have that in our own lives within this body of believers. There are opportunities to grab someone by the arm and say, hey, I'm wrestling through this. Can you pray with me? Can you pray for me? Hey, I'm really tempted in this area of my life, will you hold me accountable? And that's what it is to be a body of believers united.

He's going to expound on this further in verse five. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes. You hate all evildoers. The word "boastful" speaks of one who is very grandiose in their external appearance and they're using very flamboyant words, speaking highly of themselves and denigrating others around them. That doesn't sound like somebody to hang out with. Those are the kind of people that we tell our kids to stay away from, right? The ones that are constantly getting in trouble, the ones that are always opposed to the things that are good, who are always picking fights for no reason. This to me reminds me of the religious leaders of Jesus's day. They sought after him no matter where he was to challenge what he was saying and doing solely to try to keep him quiet, to stop the spread of his message.

He continues in verse six and he says this, you destroy those who speak lies. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. I thought about this and it is finally sweet justice because we want to see that in our lives, right? We want to see the evildoers get punished. We want to see those who oppose to get knocked down a peg or two.

We're very impatient. I mean look at our society. You could order something on Amazon probably right now and it would deliver today, no later than like five or six p.m. You could go grab lunch at a drive-through window. You could have things delivered to

your house. We want it now, now, now, now, now and that's the exact same thing we have problems with here. We want justice now too, but it doesn't work that way, in my own life at least. Maybe for you, maybe you're lucky and things work out well but for me it takes a long time and often I don't get to see it. I don't get to see those things play out, those that offend me, those that have hurt me throughout my life. I have no idea what happened to them, but I lay that at the foot of the cross and say it's not my burden to carry nor my thing to dwell upon. Instead, I'm going to press into the things which I know are good and pure and holy and true and I'm going to spend my time there.

But what will happen to those who reject God's loving, saving message? Well, if we look at Revelation 21:8, it says this. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable murderers, sexual immorals, sorcerers, idolaters, all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the second death. It's tragic to hear. It's hard to think about, but we know that God has a plan and it's beyond my responsibility. He has written the names in the book of life, and he's also got the names of those who are not going to be in the book of life.

The concept of eternity is a struggle for some and so I did this with the kids, and it didn't go over too well and I'll explain why. But if you take a roll of toilet paper and you open it up and that first square, that leading edge, that is your life. Birth, school, marriage, grandkids, death, that leading edge. And if you roll out that toilet paper all the way, that's eternity. But that even pales in a comparison to what eternity is. It's so much bigger than that. Now when I tried this with the kids, shockingly enough, you know what they cared about the most? The fact that I was wasting a roll of toilet paper. These are some COVID-scared children because toilet paper is very critical and so I rolled it back up and I took it home because I didn't want to get in trouble and get angry messages from parents. But that is the concept of eternity. It goes on for so much longer. So, I would rather dwell with the Lord at rest and peace in eternity than what's promised here in Revelation 21:8. When I dwell upon the evildoers should get their just desserts, I come back to this and say they will and it's not my responsibility.

Now let's keep going and look at verse 7. But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down towards your holy temple in the fear of you. Now David separates himself from those evildoers. This is that balancing

act that he's doing. He's going from the evildoers, now he's talking about myself. He's talking about us as believers. We need to separate. We need to dwell in the house of the Lord. We need to find our rest there. We need to find our numerous blessings there. We need to look for those opportunities to be restored if we're broken. We need to look for those opportunities to serve where we see needs. And all of that can be accomplished in the house of the Lord.

David says this is where I find my strength because I'm here with you because I can see your presence. I can dwell at rest and at peace. And it gives me boldness to then spread that message. If we look in the New Testament and we're trying to see what does it look like to have that rest, to be restored, that living water. In John 4:10-14, Jesus answered her and he said, if you knew the gift of God and who it was who says to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Now the woman said to him, sir, you have nothing to draw the water out of the well for the well is deep. Where do you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself as well as his sons and his livestock? She doesn't understand, right? She doesn't get the message. She's only looking at the physical well and saying, this guy doesn't have a bucket. Was he going to jump down there? She doesn't get that there's a different kind of water.

So, he goes on and he says, Jesus answered her, whoever drinks of the water will thirst again, speaking of the well. But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give, he will never thirst. But the water that I shall give will become in him a fountain of water, springing up into everlasting life. See, that's the water we need to chase after. That's a hard concept to explain to people, something to wrap your head around. But think of the purpose of water. Our cells, our body needs it to survive. So, he's simply playing upon that without that living water, without that restoration that can only come from me, then you're going to need to be refreshed daily because your body will grow weary again. The physical water you can drink will only take you so far, but your faith and believing in me and what I'm sharing, the words coming from my mouth, the life that I'm living, the call of who I am and why I came, that will give you an eternal healing and restoration and carry you through the remainder of your days.

Now when we enter the Lord's house and we seek His mercy, do we treat it with that same reverence? Do we look at it as a holy blessing to be there? I think sometimes we don't, and one of the commentators put it this way, in the worship of our great God, there's no place for cuteness or flippancy. For believers to enter the presence of God, to worship and to pray, it costs Jesus's life, and to treat this privilege, to treat this privilege lightly is to cheapen that sacrifice. I think there's no truer statement than that. We need to put priority on the things of the word and what it means in our life and live out that way. Chase hard after the things that God has challenged us to do.

We see that David continues and he says, in fear I will worship you, not saying I'm terrified or afraid or unable to stand because I'm just unable to grasp what you are. He's saying, but in the reverential awe of who you are in my life and how important you are, I will chase diligently. I will change. I will put in the time. I'll rise early and stay late.

In verse eight, he continues and he says this, lead me, O Lord in your righteousness, because of my enemies. Make your way straight before me. He's covering two aspects here in this statement. First of all, are we willing to follow? Are we willing to yield and let God lead the way? And second, are we able to follow? God will establish that path. Are you willing to yield and then to follow it? Sometimes we let other things be a stumbling block in our way. He's saying, get those out of your life. Look for those things and remove them so you can press in to chasing after me.

What does your path look like today? Are you putting in the effort to grow deeper, to go from that milk when we first start to the meat? Have you taken what you're learning and now you're applying it and maybe even able to share it with others? What did your path look like before you came to saving grace of who Jesus is and what does it look like now? Do you see a stark change or are you just steady and consistent and faithful? For some, it's a radical change and for some it's just consistently over and over and over again to be faithful and to follow after. So, as you ponder that, let me share with you some things that we can dig up through the word about what it is to follow the straight paths. In Psalm 3: 6, it says, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your path straight. See, it's not me, it's him. He straightens the paths before us.

In Proverbs 16:9, a man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his step. I can plan the direction I want to go but if it's not the way that God wants to take me, then he

will course correct and help find the way that he needs me to move. Jeremiah 31:9, with weeping they will come and by supplication I will lead them. I will make them walk by streams of water on straight paths in which they will not stumble for I am father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn. That sounds very peaceful to be able to be led by beautiful waters to dwell in the presence of who God is and to have comfort and security in knowing that.

Now let's contrast that against what it says in Acts 13:10. This is Paul speaking and say, you who are full of deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, your enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? See, he's challenging those who step into the way and block the path or make it difficult to chase after. Many times throughout Paul's ministry, people would rise up like that who would try to stumble him personally, those around him who are working with him and the spread of the gospel. We will have those same struggles. We were never guaranteed an easy path, but we were guaranteed a hope and a comfort as we walked through that journey. And David was very aware of this in his own life too and so that's why he stuck close. That's why he wasn't as bold to take action. He was more complacent to wait for God to open the right doors, to wait for the struggle to get to the point where God would have to work instead of trying to jump ahead and cause things to happen. He was faithful to follow.

Now let's take a look as David continues on and jumps to verse 9. For there is no truth in their mouths. Their innermost self is destruction. Their throat is an open grave. They flatter with their tongue. Make them bear their guilt, O God, and let them fall by their own counsels because the abundance of their transgressions cast them out for they have rebelled against you. So, he's diving back into those that rise up as somebody to come as a stumbling block or somebody to make a challenge of what we desire to do. And in that he's talking about how we need to find our strength to press on not from the things we are accomplishing but from what God is accomplishing in our life. The struggle is there is nothing that makes us different from them, from those that oppose us. We are the same except for our faith and our dedication to the Lord.

We see that explained a little bit better in Romans 3, starting in verse 9. What then? Are we Jews? Any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all,

both Jews and Greek, are under sin, as it is written. None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands and no one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave, and they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, and in their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. The law only points out right and wrong, but relationship with Christ and faith in Christ truly shows and separates us from who they are, the people around us who reject God's message, and who we are, Christians chasing earnestly after who God is in our life and trying to walk that out. We are simply called to faithfully follow. The works that we do should come from our faith. They should be the growth thereafter. Think of the fig tree that Jesus cursed. It looked beautiful on the outside, but there was no fruit. Jesus challenges us to be fruit bearers in the way that we act, the way that we say. Let others look at us and see a changed individual and say there's something different about that person.

Now he ends the psalm with some very encouraging words, and these are the same for each one of us. Ending in verse 11, he says this, But let all who take refuge in you rejoice. Let them ever sing for joy and spread your protection over those who love you and your name, and they may exalt you. For you bless the righteous, O Lord. You cover them with favor as with a shield. Despite all the various trials, I always take comfort anytime I hear the word "shield" when referencing God. Because it makes me think of the verse that has always stuck with me, Nahum 1:7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows those who trust in him. God knows, and he earnestly asks us to believe, and if you believe and you take rest and comfort in who he is, then you've got the strength of the Lord behind you and pushing you forward.

It's not about what I can accomplish, it's about what God can accomplish through me. Do we take a rest and our comfort dwelling there, or do we try to do on our own,

stumble and fall, and then come back to him and ask for forgiveness? Think of the prodigal son who thought he could go make his own way through life, and only when he failed miserably does he come back. Now the father could have easily said you've wasted money, time, and all these things and caused so much hurt, but instead the father ran out to meet him on the way back, because that is how much our God loves us. He understands we're going to fail, but he wants us to come back and to keep pressing in anyway, because our failure is not what defines us, it's what you do next. Do you stay down and out, or do you get back up and say it is my God who dwells within my heart who will strengthen me for the work and allows me to press on?

Looking at that, what do we take away? What do we remember from this morning? A commentator wrote it this way. David began the psalm by seeking help for himself, but he ended by seeking a blessing for all the people, including his enemies, and that's the way our devotional time ought to end as well. So, when you spend your quiet time, don't spend it casting aspersions of anger and hostility towards those who have wronged you. Lay those out and ask God to work on your behalf. Ask him to strengthen you as you seek to journey through life. Don't carry the dead weight of yesterday on your back. Lay it at the cross and find comfort in who he is.

As we draw to the close of 2025, maybe you spent this time thinking about what your life has been so far, the things you accomplished and those that maybe you didn't get to this year. Maybe you're looking forward to 2026, so maybe this was a great time to just contemplate, who do I want to be next year and how do I want to press into what God wants to do in my life? And probably one of the most important things is, are you building upon a foundation of a time alone with the Lord? Are you letting that be your strong tower and your strength? That is my encouragement to each one of you. That's where I've been encouraged through my time in growing in the faith. That's why I try to encourage the kids on Sunday morning when we get together is put in the work. Do it young, do it early, do it often. Rise and wake and put your time with the Lord because I didn't grow up in the faith. I only came to it later and I look back at those years and say, man, I would have had so much more fruit in my life if I knew who my God was and I rested in his promises.

Let's pray. Lord, we give you this time together. We thank you for the power of your word in knowing that in our feebleness and even in the words where we can't express what we think or feel, that you still hear us. You hear the inner groanings like David shared. You listen like a faithful friend. Even our ramblings and our wanderings, Lord, you were there with us and so strengthen us through this journey. Strengthen us as we get ready to go into 2026, not knowing what the future holds but knowing that you'll be there. Knowing that you've gone before us and that you've given us all that we need every day like the manna from heaven. So, we give you this time. We are so thankful for your presence, for the work of the cross and how it impacted us. Let us honor you by the way that we live, the way that we speak, and the way that we carry ourselves knowing that we have a badge of honor being called a Christian and with that comes a responsibility. So we thank you and we love you in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.