

The Faithful God for Every Day

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[0 : 0 0] Let's bow our heads and pray before we look at this marvelous psalm together. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, our God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Well, it is a privilege to be here with you this morning and I want to start off by asking you a question. How are you feeling? Christmas has passed. How are you really feeling this morning?

So as December draws to an end, as family members have probably mostly returned home, normal life has kicked in, maybe you go back to an empty house. How are you feeling this morning?

Maybe you're feeling sad because you've left family behind once more. Maybe you're disappointed because after months and months of preparation and planning, Christmas didn't quite go as you thought it would.

Or maybe you're still hurt and have hard feelings about the annual Christmas family argument. How are you feeling this morning? The end of December can be a time of great joy, but it can also be a time of great sadness, can't it?

[1 : 2 8] Maybe you join in with the rest of the world as they sit and reflect on a year gone past. Businesses, churches, charities, families and individuals often spend this time of year assessing how, in our case, 2018 was.

And they look either with anticipation or with fear at the year to come because it is full of uncertainties. Personally, I find the end of December to be an absolutely fascinating time of year.

People, both Christians and non-Christians, have taken time off work, have spent time with family, have probably visited a carol service or two, and they've celebrated.

What have they celebrated? Well, they've celebrated the birth of Jesus. Whether they knew it or not is another story. But Christmas is in the past now.

And for many people in the world, the annual thought about God and Jesus is done with. It's out the window. Until December 2019. Some people have Jesus in their rear view mirrors, but staring at them right in the face is the uncertainty of a new year.

[2 : 4 4] And just into that new year, you have the loneliness and sadness of Blue Monday, which falls on January 21st. And it's known as Blue Monday because it's apparently the longest and loneliest day of the year.

Normal life has kicked in. Christmas is gone. And you're already looking for that holiday again, aren't you? I find it interesting because on December 25th, people are so happy and so joyous as they celebrate Christmas.

But once Christmas ends, so do people's thoughts about God, don't they? Why? Well, because the world makes the fatal mistake of minimizing the God of this world to a manger.

People simplify the message of Jesus to this cute little baby and nothing more. But the psalm that was read out and that we're going to look at this morning does the exact opposite.

It presents us with the glorious news that God is the faithful God for every day. The faithful God for every day.

[4 : 02] Now, Psalm 71 is an interesting psalm because it doesn't quite fit into any particular structure. We don't really know who the author is.

We have guesses based on Psalm 70, that is David. And we don't really know any of the events that surround this psalm. And one of the reasons that it doesn't fit into a structure really is because the author seems to jump around between past experiences, present pleas for hope, and hopes for the future.

And so we'll be jumping all over the psalm this morning a little bit. But the big thing that this psalm is teaching us is that God is the faithful God for every day.

And therefore, we can trust in him. And we can have confidence in him. God is the faithful God for every day. So the writer of this psalm seems to be writing from an old age.

And you see that by the repetition of his aging features in verses 9 and 18. And because in verses 5, 6, and 17, he speaks of his youth.

[5 : 13] It's as if we get to sit at this man's feet and listen to him reminisce of a life lived that has been marked by the faithfulness of God. Maybe you know those scenes in the movies when the camera turns to a corner and suddenly you see an old person, normally sitting in a rocking chair with a blanket over their legs.

And they say something along the lines of, I haven't always been this way, you know. And then the camera zooms out and phases out. And you see a much younger version of that individual. And then they narrate the story of their life.

That's kind of what's happening in this psalm. But the psalmist starts off by praying to God for the present. So in verses 1 to 4 and verses 12 to 13, the psalmist is pleading with God to deliver him.

Enemies seem to be lurking at the door. People want him gone and he pleads to God to deliver him. But notice that he isn't on his knees.

He isn't mourning and weeping because God is silent. He isn't at his wit's end with suffering and turmoil. But he's pleading to God because he knows who God is.

[6 : 33] There is no sense of despair. Even in his present struggles, the psalmist is relying on the faithful God for every day. Look at the words that he uses to describe God and his actions.

God is his refuge, his rock, his fortress, his deliverer, his saviour and the one who listens to his cries.

All of these words that the psalmist use are strong words, aren't they? So take fortress, for example. It's a building. It's strong.

It's built to withstand even the most severe of attacks and it is built to last. It is a safe haven in times of war and it is a place where people run for shelter.

And that is the illustration the psalmist uses to describe who his God is. You can send the world's biggest army and bring it face to face with the God of this world and he will triumph hands down every single time.

[7 : 40] God is this man's fortress. Nothing can harm him because God is on his side. But this doesn't mean that the psalmist hasn't suffered.

Look what it says in verse 20. Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter. See, the psalmist is speaking to God at this point.

God is the one who let the psalmist go through difficulties. God is the one who has been there when he has been suffering. And with that knowledge in mind, he pleads and he says, God, please deliver me.

Be with me as I suffer. Friends, this morning we look ahead to a year of unknowns. We don't know what is coming.

We don't know what our lives will look like this time next year. We don't even know if we'll be here this time next year. But the psalmist encourages us to see the greatness of God.

[8 : 43] To trust him and to have confidence in him because he is the faithful God for every day. He isn't just the God who sticks around when things are nice and comfy and cozy.

He isn't a cheerleader who stands on the sidelines shouting encouragements to us. But he is the God who walks with us through thick and thin. Through pain and suffering and times of happiness.

He is the God who protects us and cares for us even when it doesn't feel like it. Even when our pain seems too much to bear.

Even when we feel the pressures of the world falling in on us. Even there, God is with us. And what does he say in verse 15?

My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds, of your saving acts all day long. Though I know not how to relate them all. So even when a situation is so bad.

[9 : 54] That we think that in no scenario at all can this be bringing any good. It is even then the psalmist says, in those times of struggle know that your God is your refuge.

And that his deeds are righteous. Now I know this year hasn't been easy for many of us. That doctor's appointment didn't go as well as we thought it would.

That loved one who is no longer around. That job that didn't come up. That feeling of despair and loneliness is still there. But let this psalm fill your minds with the grand image of God and cry out to him.

Because he listens. Call out in your pain and ask for deliverance. Ask for God to come and care for you because that's what he wants to do.

This is the faithful God for every day. The writer then changes his focus.

[11 : 07] And instead of looking at the present, he looks back on his life and reflects on how God has been with him in the past. So again, back to that movie scene. Like that scene where the old man is sitting on the porch looking off into the distance.

And he usually says something like, I remember when... Fill in the blanks. Well, the writer of this psalm sits back and tells the story of his life.

And he focuses on how God has been with him and protected him. Remember that life hasn't always been good for this man. Verses 10 and 11 give us an indication that there were times when people thought that God had left him.

Times where life was so hard and the opposition was so much. The sign that verse 7 speaks about could mean that people looked at this man's life and thought that God had abandoned him.

Thought that God had cursed him. They looked at him and they could say they thought that God had left him alone. But even in those times, he writes in verse 5 that God has been his hope.

[12 : 22] That God has been his confidence and his refuge. When? Since his youth. Through all the struggles of life. Through all the struggles that came his way.

Through all of his weaknesses, God has given him strength. And God has been with him. And even though his enemies are waiting like a pack of hungry wolves ready to pounce on an innocent, defenseless lamb.

Though he felt weak. Though he maybe didn't understand why all of this was happening. And he maybe doesn't even now. He knows that God is sovereign. Since his youth, he's relied on God because God is sovereign.

See, God has not left us to our own devices. He hasn't forgotten his people. He has not turned his back on us. But he cares and the psalmist knows it.

God brought him from his mother's womb in verse 6. And God has been with him ever since. Now this is one of the biggest encouragements that I find in life.

[13 : 30] That God is sovereign. Because I know that whatever I'm going through, whatever pain I'm in, whatever struggles I have, God sees it and God knows.

As we sit and reflect at the end of a year. As we think about the year that's gone by. As we remember the loved one that passed away. As we remember the times when we felt alone and abandoned.

As we remember those moments of loneliness. The psalmist says, Look to God because he is sovereign and he knows your pain. And you might be thinking, Well, how can you find encouragement in the fact that God knows?

And that God is sovereign. Well, because God sees everything that is going on in this world. In your life and in my life. And he will put things right.

He will right every wrong and he will bring justice. I also find this truth comforting because I know that regardless what situation I am in, I'm not alone.

[14 : 41] If you, like the psalmist, are going through times of struggle and times of pain, if you feel rejected and alone, know that God has promised to be with his people.

He has not forsaken you. He has not forgotten you. He is with you. And in verse 17, the psalmist says that God has used everything in his life to teach him.

And in verse 15, all of God's deeds are righteous, even though the writer doesn't understand them all. So does the truth of God's sovereignty mean that we don't have any questions and struggles?

No. Does it mean that as Christians, we're to live a perfect life where we're constantly happy with a smile on our face? No. Does it mean that we live in a fallen, broken world and we suffer like everybody else?

Absolutely. But we do not suffer without hope. We do not suffer like everybody else because we are, we have our deliverer.

[15 : 55] We are not alone. So we can sit back and look over this past year and we can look over our lives and say that God has been with us and has delivered us from our worst enemies because he sent his son, Jesus Christ.

And we stand on this side of the cross. And so Jesus came and lived the perfect life, died the death that we deserve and was raised to life, meaning that our worst enemies, sin and death have been destroyed.

There is no greater Christmas gift than that. We have a greater understanding of God's deliverance than the writer of this psalm does because we stand on this side of the cross.

We can see the fullness of God's mercy and forgiveness at the cross. And so as we look over our lives, as we look over this past year, we should look back to the cross and be thankful.

Because Jesus Christ made it possible for us to be made right with God. He bore the wrath that we deserve so that sinners like me and like you can be brought back to God.

[17 : 19] And our response to God should be the same as the psalmist. Look in verses 6 and 8. What is his response? Well, his knowledge of the past leads him to praise God for not just when things are going well.

And in verse 8 he says, My mouth is filled with your praises, declaring your splendor. When? Not only when things are going great, but all day long.

Now I wish I could sit at the end of this year, at the end of my life here on earth, and look back and say that I have praised God every single day, all day long.

Is that not your wish too? To look back over both the good and the bad and to praise God for all that he has done and to praise him all day long.

That's what a life focused on God looks like. That's what it looks like to live a life with the understanding of who we serve and to praise him as the faithful God for every day.

[18 : 28] And from verse 14 onwards, the writer of the psalm looks forward to the future. So far he's looked at his past and seen how God has been faithful and has kept him all the years of his life.

He's prayed and pleaded for God to be with him in his present trials and troubles. And now he turns his eyes to the years that he still has left on earth. And he says that despite his present struggles, verse 14, As for me, I will always have hope.

I will praise you more and more. Do you see what he's saying? That regardless of whatever comes my way, whatever lies before me, still I will sing your praises.

And the remaining days that we have left on earth, the psalmist says, they will be filled with me retelling God's righteous deeds. He will proclaim his testimony of how God has been with him through thick and thin, not just once, not just twice, but all day long.

But he still lives in the real world. He hasn't forgotten that struggles will come his way and he hasn't forgotten that the day will come where he breathes his last breath and he dies.

[19 : 52] And look at his marvelous, breathtaking prayer in verse 18. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, until I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.

Now every time I read that verse, I think two things. One, wow. This is a man who has been blown away by God. He's been transformed and taken aback by God's goodness and nothing in this world will stop him telling people about it.

And two, I pray, God give me this heart and this passion to share your mighty deeds. See, this man has seen God at work in his life and he cannot deny that God has done mighty things and he cannot keep quiet about it.

Before he takes his last breath, he wants to pass on his knowledge of God to the next generation. He wants to teach them who God is so that they too can learn that he is the faithful God, not just for one day a year, not just when things are going well, but the faithful God for every day.

Have you ever met someone who does a specific thing completely different from the way you would normally do it? So this last week, for example, my wife Sabina and I have been in Austria spending Christmas with her family and it's always a joy to go there, but we do Christmases very differently from the way I was brought up.

[21 : 35] So in the Charmers household, in my household, my mum would have all of the Christmas decorations up on like nine o'clock on the 1st of December. The house would be decked out with tinsel, with lights, with flashing things everywhere you could see and there was a massive tree.

Sabina's parents, on the other hand, buy their Christmas tree on the 21st of December and the whole family gathers to decorate the tree. And on the 25th of December, in the Charmers house, my parents would be woken up by me and my brothers walking around very loudly to wake them up so that we could open our Christmas gifts.

They'd all be sitting on chairs and then we'd all wrap them, we'd unwrap them as quickly as we could and there'd be just absolute chaos for about an hour as we played with different toys. Now Sabina's family celebrate Christmas very differently.

They celebrate on the 24th of December in the evening and each present is taken from under the Christmas tree and given to the person individually and everybody watches as they open their Christmas gift.

It was slightly awkward at first but I got used to it. And we do those things because that's what's been passed down from generation to generation. generation. We do what we know.

[22 : 52] We know, we do what we've been taught. And that's what the writer of this psalm says, God, before I die, let me teach the next generation. Let them not go a day without knowing who you are.

Let them not go a day without hearing of your mighty deeds because you are faithful. And this has two big applications for us this morning as a church family.

One, in the way we teach our children. If you're a parent, if you have friends who are parents, if you know children, if you see children running around here on a Sunday morning, so that basically means every single one of us, we have a responsibility to pass on our knowledge of who God is.

We do this by teaching people from the Bible, teaching children about who God is because He has revealed it to us in His Word. And we do it by pointing children to Jesus every single day.

If you're a parent, don't let a day go by in your house where your children do not hear the name Jesus. If you're a friend of people with children, don't let a day go by where you don't pray for that child.

[24 : 21] That they would come to know God as their own personal Lord and Savior because God has no grandchildren. point the next generation to God.

That is the first application. And the second one is in the way we tell people the good news of the Gospel. Live your life with your faith in Jesus open for the whole world to see.

Tell people about your life and what God has done. Tell people how and why you became a Christian. Tell people that you were at church on Sunday. Tell people the reason that you managed to get through that really difficult situation in your life was because of God.

Because He gave you strength. And tell people that they are in need of forgiveness. Tell people about the problem of their sin that cuts them off from God.

But how the solution came because Jesus bore the wrath of God on the cross and now they can be forgiven. Their debt can be paid, their judgment can be taken, and their identities can be made new in Jesus.

[25 : 42] As this man looks to the future, he isn't plodding along in life. He isn't just cruising through waiting for his final breath, but look at verses 22 to 24.

This man is rejoicing. He is celebrating and praising God out of a pure and honest joy because of what will happen in the future.

verses 20 and 21 describe the wonderful truths that God will restore life again and deal well with His people.

God will stand on that final day and say, well done, good and faithful servant. And that is the future that we should eagerly be awaiting. Friends, as we look ahead and we see 2019 just coming over the horizon, as we anticipate times of rejoicing and times of sorrow and pain, as we think about difficult decisions, different relationships and different people, or maybe as you think of a new phase of life starting, how great would it be if the Psalms prayer in verse 18 was the marker of our lives?

How great would it be to sit this time next year and say that we have done everything we possibly could to pass on the knowledge of God to the next generation, whether that's to children or to non-Christians?

[27 : 15] I think that this would completely change our sight and our lives because we would be more focused on God. We would be a transformed people for the glory of God.

And my prayer is that like this Psalmist, we'll be able to look back over our lives, whether that's in 10, 20 or 50 years, and say that we have seen God at work and we have praised Him for it.

And we can have confidence because we know that God is sovereignly working out His plan. And we look to the future with a burning desire to see the kingdom of God spread, to see more people come to know God.

That is what it means to see and understand that God is the faithful God for every day. So think back to where we started off. People all over the world have just celebrated the birth of Jesus, whether they did so intentionally or not.

But all across the UK, people have attended carol services, church services, and they've done their church bit for the year. People confine God to one day of the year.

[28 : 36] But what this Psalm encourages us to do is to lift our eyes and see that God is the faithful God for every single day of our lives. Not just once a year, not just once in a while when we're struggling, but God is faithful to his promises and he has promised to protect and be with his people.

God is faithful. Is this your view of God? Or have you confined him to December 25th? I'd encourage you to start this new year by maybe reading Mark's gospel with somebody.

Whether you're not a Christian, whether you're a new Christian, or whether you've been a Christian for years, meet up with somebody, read Mark's gospel, pray together, and investigate, if you're not a Christian, why so many people live their lives for God and not for themselves.

And to seriously consider why we believe that God is the faithful God for every day. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father, loving God and heavenly Father, we come before you and we ask for forgiveness for the times we confine you to one day a year.

Or the times and the days that go by where we don't think about you, we don't thank you, we don't even notice your righteous and mighty deeds that you do for us every single day.

[30 : 14] Father, this year help us wake up and give thanks that we have woken up and that we are breathing fresh air. And help us give thanks for the new relationship that we can have with your son and with you because of the cross.

We ask all of this in the mighty, holy, and precious name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.